

BBWN

P.O. Box 1534
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130



Nothing to Lose but Our Illusions...

THE POLITICS OF FEMINIST BISEXUALITY

by Kit Womantree

(excerpted from Big Mama Rag, April 1981)

In the American pornographic tradition, bisexuality is seen as a hip way to cover all bases, relate to everyone. Liberals will drone, "Everyone is bisexual anyway," at the drop of a threat of lesbian unity. The bisexual woman is seen as male-centered, turning to women for variety and perhaps to turn on a man. The bi woman is supposed to be a carefree butterfly, living only for pleasure. She flits from flower to flower (who cares whether they have pistils or stamens), sucks up whatever sweetness she can, and moves on.

Bitter reality differs. I am a radical feminist, a lesbian for five years and now bisexual, but not carefree. I am writing this article to sort out for myself the issues of power and privilege bisexual feminists face. I will go deep into problems bisexual feminists have with the women's movement, not because I am trying to guilt-trip anyone or because I want feminists to feel sorry for us, but because I have a unique perspective on the lesbian/straight split of the woman's movement, and I think to understand bisexual problems could lead to compassion, tolerance and an eventual healing of this split. I don't think it is important that every feminist try being bisexual. I don't think that bisexuals are necessarily better feminists. The idea that any sexual preference can of itself lead to being a stronger liberationist has led to too many problems already.

Common Patterns in Bisexual Lives

1. We are drawn sexually to both certain women and certain men. This attraction is physical, gut-level, and irrational in that it is not influenced by reason. Feminist politics, previous orgasms, and previous rejections may affect us acting on desire, but they don't change the physical reaction to being around someone we want.
2. We are different from each other in how we are with our lovers. We could be more physically drawn to one sex, and have a strong emotional need for the other sex. We could be monogamous or non-. We often retreat from everyone, console ourselves with our cats, develop masturbation into a fine art, read, drink, chew our fingernails, or write articles for BMR.
3. Other things bisexual/former dykes have in common: we're very aware of our new found heterosexual privilege. We try not to use it (Not being blatant with our male lovers in public.) We feel guilty and defensive about being with men.

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Breaking the Mold

(reprinted from Bi-monthly, London, England)
by David Smith

The study of bisexuality is at the spearhead of a movement to break the mould forced onto sexuality by scientists and social commentators. This is the view of Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz of the Department of Sociology at the University of Washington, U.S.A. They feel that the way scientists and the population view sexuality can be transformed by the proper consideration of bisexuality.

As far back as 1948, Alfred Kinsey and his colleagues found that up to 37 percent of the population of the United States had had some sort of homosexual experience but that only four percent were exclusively lesbian or gay. More recent studies have confirmed these figures but the subject of bisexuality has rarely been considered for its own sake. In fact it has been banished to the fringes of sexuality and treated only as a curiosity, in the same way as androgyny, transvestism, transexuality, hermaphroditism, celibacy and asexuality. And consequently bisexuality is seen as the domain of cranks and eccentrics.

As Blumstein and Schwartz tell us, bisexuality does not fit in to the stereotyped view of sexuality. We are either male or female, masculine or feminine, heterosexual or homosexual. "Our cultural logic holds that it is almost impossible to have only some homosexual feelings. The idea is seldom questioned that a single homosexual act or strong homosexual feelings reveal the 'true person' ... We have no imagery for partial states of being...."

And yet even a cursory study of bisexuality throws serious doubt on traditional notions that sexual orientation and sexual identity are unchanging and unchangeable. Blumstein and Schwartz found that people could change these without even being aware that it was possible. Childhood and adolescent experiences were by no means the final determining factors. These findings have enormous implications for an argument which has been raging in the world of psychology and sociology for over a century.

Freud first came up with the idea of bisexuality as a natural state, but there has always been disagreement about whether homosexuality is biological or at least determined in childhood or whether it can be 'acquired' at any time in the course of one's

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The newsletter of The Boston Bisexual Women's Network

net-work (nĕt'wŭrk') *n.* 1. An openwork fabric or other structure in which rope, thread, wires, or other materials cross at regular intervals. 2. Anything resembling a net in concept or form, as by being dispersed in intersecting lines of communication

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

What is the Boston Bisexual Women's Network? Who are we? What have we done and what do we want to do? These are questions that the coordinating committee grappled with at our last meeting. (See CC minutes.) Our answers to these questions were as diverse as our group, but one point surfaced quite clearly - we are experiencing growing pains and pleasures. The pleasures, of course, are watching our mailing list GROW and reading the enthusiastic support letters from bisexuals across the country. The pains are the "burnout" experienced by active BBWNers who shoulder most of the responsibility for keeping the Network and all its activities running; and the disappointment that we "idealists" have not been responsive to the needs - political, social, and emotional - of our community. The latter we've attempted to address with the enclosed survey. The former - "burnout" - is less easily remedied but is being addressed in the altering the structure of participation to broaden the base of active support and distribute the responsibility more evenly (see Newsletter Committee Forming).

But these are only stop-gap measures which will have only temporary effect if we don't collectively alter our attitudes - attitudes socialized into us by the prevailing hierachial structures that we as individuals can't participate in desision-making, and that our opinions don't count. BBWN tries to be the opposite of a hierachy by being a collective and a network in which all are welcomed to participate. The main desision-making BBWN group is the Coordinating Committee which is composed of any members who have attended 2 consecutive CC meetings. The CC is self-selective; i.e., you can decide that you want to be a member. All women, their opinions, energies, and ideas are welcomed -- not only welcomed, but encouraged and entreated to make your voice be heard. Perhaps all you can do at this time is to fill out the enclosed survey. (Please DO!!) Or maybe you have an idea, comment or complaint that you would like aired before the CC. In that case, you can either drop a note to our post office box, or call Blake (265-5608) who will bring your message before the Coordinating Committee. But to whatever degree, please GET INVOLVED!! BBWN needs you to keep our network active and healthy.

NEWSLETTER STAFF FOR THIS ISSUE

Blake Walton, editor and paste-up; Laura S., co-editor and paste-up; Mary Charlotte Domandi, mail handling, mailing list maintenance, paste-up; Elissa Malcohn, typing; contributors - Robyn O., Betty A., Sylvia S., Elissa Malcohn

TREASURER'S REPORT



GOODBYE, SYLVIA!! HELLO, SHARON!!

Many of you know Sylvia S. either personally because of her consistent activity in the Network, or through these pages where she has been referred to as "the backbone of the Network." For more than two years, Sylvia has been the BBWN Treasurer, keeping the Network on it's financial feet. Now, as she is retiring from that office, we want to take this opportunity to heartily thank Sylvia for her energy, dedication, and humor over the years. She is certainly in the ranks of the "near Goddess". Thanks. Taking over the role of Treasurer is Sharon G., a relative new comer to Boston who has already made her presence felt by attending CC meetings and participating in the planning of the upcoming conference. Come say "welcome" to Sharon in Feb. at the potluck dinner at her house. (See calender for more info.)

BALANCE as of October 1, 1985	\$540.46
EXPENSES	
Printing of special Nov. fundraising letter	59.17
Printing of Dec-Jan newsletter	189.40
Printing of BBWN stationery	16.49
Post Office, Bulk Mail account	100.00
2500 new envelopes (unprinted)	53.60
Annual P.O. Box rental	22.00
Annual Bulk Mail Permit Fee	40.00
Incidental supplies	9.53
Oct-Nov-Dec Checking account service charge	5.25
INCOME	
Membership dues & advertising fees	725.50
Oct-Nov-Dec Checking account interest	2.60
BALANCE as of January 1, 1986	\$773.12

BODYWORKS



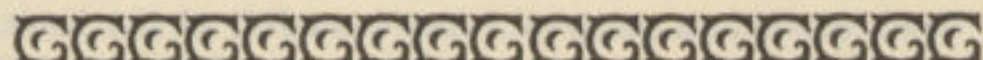
MARGARITA ASCENCIO
576-1493

53 RIVER STREET, CAMBRIDGE, NR CENTRAL SQUARE (T)

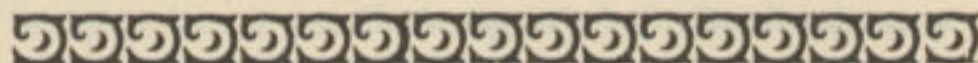
C. C. Minutes for November

Present: Beth I., Robyn O., Betty A., Kate K., Sharon G., Laura S., Cathy C., Joanna A., Blake W., Pepper G.
Meeting for the purpose of looking at BBWN: to review what we're doing and discuss the future direction of BBWN.


- 1.) It was noted that BBWN is a collective. Those who participate are those who decide the direction of BBWN, therefore, anyone who wishes a particular action or emphasis has an open option of getting involved.
- 2.) Robyn gave a brief history of BBWN starting with a bi-support group 5 years ago that folded but was the beginning of what is now a Network with a mailing list of more than 500 names.
- 3.) Concern was expressed about those BBWN'ers who were once very involved and are no longer connected.
- 4.) Other issues discussed included: how to help empower BBWN members in getting involved and taking part in the continuation of BBWN. The possibility of a buddy system or form of apprenticeships on the jobs that keep BBWN running was mentioned.
- 5.) A committee was formed to work on a survey to try to find out from the BBWN membership what they would like to see happening in BBWN and how they would like to be involved.
- 6.) The next General Meeting is January 22 to be organized by Joanna A. Topic to be decided.
- 7.) Several committees were discussed as possibilities to try to take the load off a small core of BBWN shoulders.



We're not the only ones having conferences on bisexuality. Word comes via the Bi-monthly (published by the London Bisexual Group) that the Edinburgh Bisexual Group is sponsoring the third National(!) Politics of Bisexuality Conference. Topics include Sexism, Heterosexism, Power & Privilege, Feminism and Sexism (women only), Varieties of Feminism (women only), Isolation, Building Groups, Bisexuality and the Media, Polymorphous Perversity. Sounds provocative and interesting! I'm sure the Bi-Monthly would welcome news and articles from the Yankee bisexuals, so if any of you feel the pen-pal urge, write Bi-monthly, BM BI, London WC1N 3XX, ENGLAND.



BETH WALSH

MASSAGE  POLARITY

617-576-1493

617-623-7258

The Conference: Behind the Scenes

Many of you are aware of and looking forward to the Third Regional Conference on Bisexuality on March 7-9th. You may be envisioning the excitement of meeting new friends from around the region and the stimulation of participating in workshops. But can you envision the amount of time and effort that has gone into making this conference possible? It's hard to grasp, even for those who have been "envisioning" this conference since last year's conference.

The first official planning meeting took place on October 5, 1985 in Providence, RI. Most of the major workers were there: Alan H, Charles G, Pepper G, Robyn O, Ginny L, Scott L, John H, Laura S, Beth I, Owings S, and Roy S. In that first 8 hour brainstorming marathon, the entire structure and philosophy of the conference was decided.

Goals in putting on this conference are:

- Publicize bisexuality throughout the Northeast Region.
 - Make money to support the member organizations and outreach throughout the year.
 - Provide a place for bisexuals and their friends to get together to explore and affirm themselves and one another.
 - Provide a social gathering time and place for bisexuals throughout the Northeast Region.
 - Give us a chance to strategize together on logistics and organizing.
- The conference will be March 7-9, 1985, at University of Southern Maine, Portland, Maine. Having it in Portland at this time will:
- Move it out of the middle of the Northeast Region (it has been held in Hartford and Boston), emphasizing that it is a REGIONAL conference.
 - Encourage the large number of interested folks in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont to get together and organize networks to support one another there.
 - Make the conference accessible to people in Montreal and environs.
 - Tie in with a week of events on campus for Women's Week, including the Women's Sexuality Conference on March 9, 1985.

Within days, all the participants received 8 pages of computer generated notes, as they regrouped in their various locales and task forces. The Boston area was primarily responsible for the Program Planning (deciding on program format, topics, writing topic descriptions, securing facilitators for all workshops), Publicity (designing, printing, and mailing the brochures, placing ads, generating publicity), Pre-registration by mail, Registration on-site, Entertainment, Volunteers, and Transportation. After another flurry of "MacIntosh" notes and a gaggle of meetings the Program Committee wrote all the "blurbs," the Publicity Committee designed the flyer and both got together to "stuff 'n mail." Now, in this lull before registrations begin to roll in and conference details inundate them, we'd like to take the time to acknowledge these hardworking, dedicated Bi's. Thanks and see you at the conference!

CONFERENCE 'REPORTERS' NEEDED

Are you planning on attending the conference? We need people to write their impressions of the conference for the newsletter, especially reports on specific workshops. If you would be interested (prior writing experience not essential — just enthusiasm), please call Blake at 265-5608.



My first experience with BBWN was during the 1984 Summer Retreat, held at Another Place in Greenville, NH. I was encouraged to go by Beth S. and after breaking through my initial rush of panic and fear I decided to go. I'm very glad I did because I HAD ONE OF THE BEST WEEKENDS OF MY LIFE!

Putting the weekend in quick perspective it went as follows: have anxiety attacks and agonize over what the hell I'm doing the entire way up (exacerbated, of course, by my getting lost), finally arrive and while searching for Beth to fill me on what had been going on and what was to be occurring, met Robyn O.

After claiming a bed and putting my gear away I meandered back downstairs and around the property. While walking I wondered if I had made the right decision about going on the retreat in the first place. I suppose the doubt I was experiencing was normal but discomfiting.

I immediately began to feel better upon Beth's arrival back to the property. Shortly thereafter everyone gathered for dinner and after dinner everyone helped prepare the back field for the sweatlodge being held that evening.

While some people participated in the sweatlodge, others (myself included) sat around the bonfire talking, singing songs, and upon being a twelve course dinner for at least one thousand mosquitos I went inside and waited for the last of the sweaty participants to arrive so I could go to sleep. (I was holding valuables for those in the sweatlodge and couldn't go to sleep until I returned them.)

Short aside: I sleep "A Boffo." Now this in and of itself is quite unremarkable, however, since I had never undressed in anyone's presence before (especially not a dynamo like my roomie - she led the sweatlodge) I was quite apprehensive. The other reason I was nervous was because of my weight.

Being heavy for the past twenty years has provided me with the unlimited opportunity to learn how to feel unattractive, self conscious, worthless, lonely, embarrassed and uncomfortable about myself both physically and emotionally, as well as another long, long list of negative adjectives that I won't embark upon at this time.

I've given this background information so you'll have some understanding of what was reeling through my mind as I made a marvelous (yet nerve wracking) breakthrough and decided that no one would faint dead away if they saw me unclothed. So, taking the proverbial deep breath (gasp, shudder) I proceeded to get undressed for bed while pretending to chat calmly with my roomie, and..... SURVIVED THE EXPERIENCE! (Imagine, all this emotion



and I wasn't even with a new lover - let alone an old one).

Survive the experience, hell, I was keyed up, exhausted, fearful, exhilarated, hot, cold, weak, strong, and PROUD. Physically I may have been lying in bed, but the rest of me was zooming along, oh, maybe at a mere 500 miles an hour.

After zooming along for awhile my mind and body began to relax. I realized with exquisite clarity that being relaxed and unselfconscious about my body were integral parts of creating a new reality and direction for my life. A life that would be relatively free of the many demeaning and depressing attitudes, concepts, theories, and CRAP that I had absorbed up to that time.

I also realized that the spectacular atmosphere of warmth, trust, acceptance, encouragement, openness and caring had most definitely paved the way for a number of significant breakthroughs. With a shiver and a sigh, and a silent giggle of glee, I snuggled my way to a deep and satisfying sleep.

The following morning I snapped upright out of a sound sleep at the ungodly hour of 6:00 am. I sat there reviewing the past day's experiences and decided that everything I had gone through had been well worth however anxious or upset I may have felt at the time. I also knew that no matter what happened the rest of the weekend, I would be able to handle it to my satisfaction. Even if it meant having to deal with very painful and well entrenched patterns of negative behavior.

Thankfully, my worst fears were exactly that, just fears. The rest of the retreat weekend was uplifting and marvelously relaxing (albeit filled with a certain amount of tension). The segment I am referring to was the massage class that was given.

My greatest expectations, and not unexpectedly, my greatest amount of nervousness (not excluding getting undressed) were in reference to the massage class. I had decided to go no matter what. So, off I went to the class, and not only were there about twenty women there (including myself and my friend Beth) but there were MEN there! Now if you thought I was nervous about getting undressed in the presence of other women you can just imagine how calm (Ha, Ha) I was feeling about getting undressed in the presence of men.

I overcame my apprehension by reminding myself of the promise that I had made to myself about dealing with whatever came up. I also reminded myself how much I loved getting massaged and figured that getting a massage was worth putting up with the anxiety I was experiencing. Beth also assisted in not letting me miss such a wonderful event by promising to massage me after I massaged her.

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NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE FORMING

According to the survey published in the last issue, for as many as 50% - 75% of our membership, the newsletter may be their only contact with BBWN. In light of this fact, the newsletter - its quality, newsworthiness, and relevance - becomes one of the most important links in the Network, and as such, should reflect as much as possible the broad range of voices making up our community. Recognizing that we all lead busy lives (and need to be protected against over commitments and the resulting burnout) and that some of us might feel intimidated by lack of experience to volunteer for the newsletter, we have devised a structure that should make the plunge more supportive and rewarding:

We are looking for at least six women to make a six month commitment of 3-5 hours per month to participate in all aspects of the newsletter: advertising; writing, soliciting, and editing articles; calendar listings; design, layout, and paste up. Duties will be rotated each issue and at the end of six months, several people will rotate off the committee making way for new members. In this way, a core group of members will be learning all aspects of newsletter production in a supportive atmosphere. Blake will serve as managing editor during this time, scheduling meetings and taking overall responsibility for the newsletter.

If you would be interested in this time-limited, learning experience on the newsletter, either now or in the future, or if you would like to be an occasional contributor to the newsletter in the form of book, film, and/or music reviews, please call Blake at 265-5608. WE NEED YR HELP!!!!



DESPERATELY SEEKING buyers for: a) Sear's 10-speed bicycle (yellow) with attachment making it into an indoor exercycle, \$45; b) Fuji 10-speed lightweight bicycle (red), like new, \$55; c) weight bench and 150 lbs of weights (needs bar for weights), \$40. Cash and carry. Call Blake, 265-5608, 661-3567.

Reader's Forum



Dear Friends,

I just finished reading your fine article about the "Celebrating Our Unity and Diversity" conference in your newsletter. I am personally deeply touched that you felt so good about the conference.

In this article, as well as the article in the newsletter announcing the conference, you stated that this conference was sponsored by over 30 organizations, including BBWN. This is not the case. As a matter of fact we spoke to Robyn Ochs about this after the error last time. It is true that 30 organizations endorsed (gave support) to the conference. I would therefore like to ask you to print a correction. The conference was organized and sponsored only by Lifeline Institute, Hampshire College Women's Center, the Valley Gay Alliance, and Face to Face. After a month of planning, doing hours upon hours of work, it is important to us that we get the credit.

I am sure this all is just a miscommunication. But we would appreciate the correction.

Again, thank you for your fine coverage and support.

—Tetty E. Gorfine

Dear BBWN,

I MISS YOU!

Being back at school (Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT) is wonderful and awful, exciting and terrifying, and above all, busy. I'm very active in feminist and bisexual lesbian politics, groups, functions, etc. and it's all very frustrating/satisfying but somehow it's just not the same. I miss you as individuals and as a group. I haven't been able to get to Boston for any meetings or to see any of you, but I think about you often. The good news is that I will most likely be back in Boston next fall. The bad news is that I have to finish school first!

Love and hugs to you all.

—Paula

P.S. Enclosed please find \$25, which for a student is near-goddess like.

THANK YOU, BIVOCALS! for perfect attendance, support, presents, applause on Dec. 7. You make me free to be you and me! Much love to: Kate, Joanna, Megan, Robyn, Lucinda and Kate D, Sylvia and Lisa-in-Absentia, from Marcia.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY -- 1986

Dear Boston Area Women's Organizations:

Plans for our celebration of International Women's Day, March 8, 1986, are falling into place, and we are looking forward to an exciting day. We are dedicating the day to Winnie Mandela of South Africa. The event will begin with a noon rally at Copley Square, followed by a march to the Massachusetts College of Art. At the College, from about 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., there will be a program of speakers and entertainment from various cultures, as well as food and literature/sales tables.

Organizations are invited to participate by:

- o carrying your banner in the march
 - o setting up and staffing a literature and/or (non-food) sales table
 - o raising funds for your organization by setting up a food sales table
 - o donating money to help pay program costs
 - o helping to publicize the celebration
 - o being included in follow-up activities.
- Individuals from your organization may participate by:
- o joining a Coalition committee (budget, publicity/outreach, program, logistics)
 - o attending the rally, march, and program
 - o donating food to a table to raise funds for the Coalition
 - o working on the day of the event

You will receive additional publicity about the International Women's Day Celebration soon. In the meantime, your questions may be directed to Louise Vrande at 491-6050.

In sisterhood,

Coalition for International Women's Day '86

Betty Aubut -- 497-9555 I hope you will consider becoming a BBWN contact person or co-ordinator for this event. If you are planning to attend the march and wish to walk with the BBWN contingent, watch for our banner or call me for info. If there are several bi women attending, perhaps a committee could be set up to share the responsibilities. BBWN is also interested in having an information table at the rally so...if it is possible for you to be involved in staffing the table for any length of time, please call. There will be a meeting of organization co-ordinators on Tues, Feb. 11 at 5:30 at Emmanuel Church, 15 Newbury St., Boston. Anyone interested in going to the meeting to represent BBWN - please do.



NEW WORDS

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March 3-13, 1986

Coordinated by the UNH President's Commission
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- 3/3 Women as Image and Image Makers *** Producers of Science and Technology: The Greatest Myths of All
- 3/4 Taking Women Seriously in the University: A Theatrical Review *** Female Friendships
- 3/5 Women's Literature: From Frontier Romance to Gay Paris
- 3/6 Small Happiness: Women of a Chinese Village *** Silent Pioneers *** What is Lesbian Culture History and Why Preserve It?
- 3/7 International Perspectives on Women's Culture *** Women in Nicaragua: The Second Revolution
- 3/10 Gender Differences and Moral Conscience *** Expanding Our World: Educating Ourselves on Black Women's Culture *** Women's Culture and Social Change: A Comparison
- 3/12 Reconciling Two Cultures: Iroquois Grandmother and College Instructor *** Integrating Women Studies into the Curriculum: A Workshop for Faculty *** Coeducation in the University in the Year 2000
- 3/13 Experiences of Older Women

THE LESBIAN AND GAY FREEDOM TRAIL BAND

Play an instrument? Interested in expanding your social network? Want to meet a terrific group of women and men who make beautiful music together? The Freedom Trail Band is about to celebrate it's first birthday and would love to do this by increasing in size. When you join us, either as an instrumentalist, twirler, band-aid, flag bearer or in whatever other way your imagination can dream up; you are joining a national organization of performers called the Lesbian and Gay Bands of America. I have never experienced "gay pride" in more magnitude than knowing that on Tuesday nights, at 7:30, there are women and men all across the country gayly making music together. Although we are still in our 'concert season', we are gearing up for the 1986 Lesbian and Gay Pride celebrations in Boston, New York, D. C., and Houston. 1986 will be a very special year for Lesbian and Gay athletes throughout the country with the Gay Games being held in San Fran. in August. The Boston Lesbian and Gay Freedom Trail Band will be there supporting New England athletes and participating in a National Lesbian and Gay Band concert. I get goosebumps just thinking about it. I am the only openly bisexual member of the band, and would like to become less of a minority. Come be with us in whatever way you can. We are also looking for an assistant conductor to help ease the burden of our present conductor, George Fulginiti-Shakar. George is a member of the musical group Bright Morning Star and a terrific musician/conductor whose humor and presence contributes to making Tuesday nights one of my favorite nights of the week. The Freedom Trail Band rehearses at the YWCA on Clarendon St., Boston (easily accessible by T.) Call me, Betty, at 497-9555 or Maryhelen at 327-9853 for info about getting involved.

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We have a desperate need to feel a part of the radical women's community; we need feminist support to stay sane and to grow politically. At the same time we feel alienated from this community, uncomfortable and out of place at lesbian events, angry at jokes that belittle men, male children and straight women, afraid of being found out. Some of us don't go to any event that has lesbian in the title out of a desire to respect lesbian separatism. We go to events that say All women welcome.

4. We struggle with our male lovers around sexism. We do cop some privilege by being with men but we pay a high price. We have to deal with the fact that we might get pregnant. The need for birth control, with all of its health hazards and hassles, comes as a rude shock after years of lesbian lovemaking. We have to deal with our male lovers' secret homophobia. They often feel pride at having lured us from our decadent ways, and don't want to hear good things about the women we loved and love.

Almost all men are threatened by strong, radical feminists. At the same time they are attracted by and fascinated with radical women.

In time this leads to being a strong but cynical woman who needs male approval on some level but feels contempt for men. And who isn't getting her emotional needs met.

5. We can't talk about our problems with men to our lesbian friends. We cannot trust them not to get smug, even though we know and they know that lesbians also have power struggles, oppress each other, use and abuse each other. But something in the face, eyes or voice betrays smugness if we try to talk about our struggles with sexism with men. Some will come right out and say it, "What did you expect, being with a man? Why don't you just give up and find a good woman?"

6. We get our political and personal support from each other, that is bisexual and straight women. We laugh, cry, share rage, feel less isolated. Perhaps this is the way it should be.

So why bother staying bisexual? A fair question. Because we want to. Life is pretty damn grim and we have to compete for everything we need. If we do grab some sweetness here and there to stay sane, who the hell has the right to judge us? Also, we want men in our life. Not as bosses, dictators, oppressors, but as friends, allies, and lovers, because in our own vision of a revolutionary future we can't see only half a human race.

Why Lesbians Don't Trust Bisexuals

I sense in lesbians an unconscious fear that we will betray them, leave the movement, live in some man's shadow, blissfully ignorant of our own and other's oppression. There are some reasons for this fear — some are good reasons and some are off the wall, stemming from dyke chauvinism.

The good reasons:

1. Bisexuals can cop a little male privilege and heterosexual privilege if they try. Lesbians will never be socially acceptable in straight society.

2. Bisexual women have burned many lesbians personally over the years — running off to a man whenever they started being scared of their outlaw status, and needing reassurance that she was still attractive to men.

3. Bisexuality, if society in general accepted it in the liberal sense, i.e., "Everyone's bisexual anyway," could really undermine lesbian unity, strength, and pride. And it would undermine women's independence from men; because society is so heterosexual that it will be assumed that the bisexual is out there mainly for men.

ENERGY STEALING — MYTH OR MAGIC?

There is this idea, common in the women's community, that those who relate sexually to men steal energy from those that don't. It's really a simple process. When we (men-lovers) are at a women's conference or concert, we are slowly, secretly absorbing the positive charge off the women's auras around us (more difficult, of course, should she be wearing denim or leather — clothing-butches take note) and we beam it back in a steady stream to our distant boy friend who greedily sucks it up, thereby getting his revenge for being barred from an all-women's event.

So much for energy stealing. But there are two beliefs that are real energy stealers — the biggest frauds of the women's liberation movement: Homophobia and Dyke Chauvinism: Two Sides of the Same Coin

The coin is male privilege, and it's a fake — silver-plated, but a plain copper cent in the middle, because that is all the male privilege any woman will ever get to keep. A heterosexual can lose it when she is divorced, when a man leaves her, when she gets too uppity, when she is old and "unattractive" according to society. The lesbian loses it when she steps out of her women's bar or concert, and when she stops pretending she has it all. To the man on the street, we're just another piece of ass; to the boss, another pair of hands; to ruling-class men, another womb to control.

We get this worthless coin when we are coupled with, or imitating, men. We clutch it because of the benefits we get from it.

For the heterosexual woman, these benefits are: she gets to feel "safe" from other men. The physical power of the man she's with is supposed to protect her from rape and sexual harassment. As his side-kick, she also gets some of his power over others, prestige and money; how much she gets depends on his class privilege. Now we all know it doesn't always work this way; she can still get raped, harassed and cheated. But that's the way it's supposed to be — the myth that keeps women hanging on.

Because she's with a man, she also gets heterosexual privilege. This means she gets to feel accepted by society, attractive, o.k., and normal. When she kisses him on the street, people think it's cute; she can gossip about him with co-workers, family and friends, and, again, feel socially acceptable, attractive, and normal. Unlike a lesbian, she will not get into a fistfight or have water thrown on her for showing affection to her lover; she will not get that strange, glazed, "I don't want to talk about it" look from her friends and co-workers; she will not lose her kids, her family, or her job because of her sexual preference.

She fears losing this privilege and the little bit of power, she has to manipulate men by flirting or withholding sexual favors. This fear of losing privilege is called homophobia. If she lets homophobia rule her, it will keep her from listening to (that glazed look I was talking about), hearing about, or associating with lesbians because she might catch the Social Disease of queerness and so lose the little security she has.

(Continued on page 8)





(Continued from page 7)

It's a tribute to woman's courage that so many of us took the risk and became lesbians. However, once we became lesbians, we found out we could still get fake male privilege in another form. Our heterosexual privilege is gone, though, as soon as we publicly come out as lesbians.

Lesbians can cop some male privilege in the following ways:

Dress like a man. Talk about women like a man. Cover up your feelings like a man. Fight over a petty insult like a man. Feel superior to other women if you work in a "man's job." Feel superior to women who are dependent on men — financially, emotionally ... like a man. Get into sex roles. Have a "wife." Have a steady lover to feel secure and then one or two on the side. Sound familiar? Feel superior to men as lovers because you know you can have an orgasm and give your lover one ... sometimes. Ring a bell? Most of all, feel superior to, different from, most women. Like a man.

We have all known women who have done some of these things. We have all done them ourselves, me included. Feminism forced lesbians to drop the facade of sex roles, and take a hard look at what we were doing to each other. We had to change, a painful process we are all still going through. Some lesbians saw this male-imitation thing clearly, and took off the other way, getting into matriarchy, dropping "men" out of "womyn" and "wimmin," celebrating femaleness as the new standard. Separatism became a goal in itself instead of a political tactic, and expanded into separatism from male children and women who related to men. The culture (music, writing, theatre) which is coming out of this woman-identification is beautiful and powerful and I need it badly. But we can be blinded by its richness. We can be blind to the fact that we are still reacting to, away from, men, that our very lives are dependent on decisions men in power make, and that, even being aware of and dropping all the former fantasies of male power and privilege, we are still imitating men in one important respect. We still feel superior to "ordinary women," who are not like us.

Dyke Chauvinism

I do not intend here to downgrade the courage of lesbians living as sexual outlaws, in a world that despises them. I know that lesbians have paid an emotional price, and may have sacrificed friendships, family, and loved ones to be where they are. I was lucky in that my support group has stayed with me through all my changes. So lesbian-feminists have a lot to be proud of. But nothing to be smug about.

Lesbians still hurt each other and not only in personal relationships, but through racism and class privilege. If there's one thing I've learned it's that rejection hurts, pain is pain, whether from a man or a woman. If it's from a man, then, well, what were you doing with him in the first place, and, if it's from a woman, she's a sister and she's not supposed to do that to you.

What I left out about bi's:

In this article I have focused mainly on bisexual woman who decide to relate to men after being lesbians. I haven't talked much about the

women who feel bisexual but are only with women. The reasons for their choice (male sexism and fear of rejection from lesbians) I have covered. There may be other reasons: I also haven't talked about how hard it is to stay out of sex roles with a man. I spent so much time talking about the contradictions between the women's community and women who relate to men because it is such a sensitive issue and needs to be openly explored. Sometimes I'm not sure if bisexuals are getting "the best of both worlds" or the worst.

I have got more support from lesbian-feminists that I ever expected, even with the "ignorant comments" and gossip that came down. This to me shows that we are ready to deal in a concrete, specific way with the lesbian/straight split in the women's movement.

IF: Lesbians who talk about "reaching out" to straight women, will "reach in" instead, to see that their unconscious attitudes of dyke superiority block any possibility of unity. When a dyke thinks of men as boys and pricks, she thinks of a woman who is with a boy/prick as a FOOL. Women are perceptive enough to know when they are thought of as fools — we get it all the time from men.

IF: Lesbians can realize that heterosexual women also have courage, in trying to struggle with their men, in trying to form equal relationships. Lesbians should be, and are grateful, that these women are doing the intimate, day-to-day "dirty work."

IF: Straight women realize what a fantasy their male privilege is, and how homophobia holds back their political and personal growth. If they can see that the lesbian "strike" against men gives their demands for change that much more credibility. "Shape up, Jack — I can always ship out."

IF: This article made you angry or made you think, it created energy for the women's movement, and didn't rob you of anything.



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(continued from page 4)

It was worth every minute of apprehension that I had felt! Not only did I break through more internal walls, I had progressed to feeling so relaxed after the massage that it was at least ten minutes before I was able to get up. And that meant lying on the floor clothed only in my underwear while plenty of other people walked around getting ready to leave. WHAT I LOOKED LIKE DIDN'T MATTER, I WAS AT HOME IN ME!

I left the retreat incredibly relaxed and tremendously at peace with myself. I had managed to break through a great deal of crap that I had carried around inside myself for as long as I could remember and I felt SPECTACULAR!

There are more experiences to follow, so please stay tuned for Part II. Love, Laura S.



(continued from page 1)

life. Law-reformers, quoting psychologists, most often stressed the notion that homosexuals were 'born like that' and 'couldn't help it' and thus it was inhuman to persecute them. To admit that sexual orientation is not fixed, invites the demand that it should be made as difficult as possible for people to 'become homosexual.'

Consequently the concept of bisexuality was often deliberately ignored.

In their study of 156 bisexual women and men, Blumstein and Schwartz were interested in four major questions. First, is bisexuality a continuous preordained theme throughout a person's life, or does it emerge and change with circumstances? Second, what are the complex factors which lead to a person's self-definition? Third, which circumstances are most conducive to bisexuality? Fourth, do women and men differ with regard to the first three questions?

In investigating the complexities of choosing a label to describe one's sexuality, it was found that actual sexual activity doesn't necessarily bear any relation to the labels chosen. These seem to be randomly rejected, accepted or imposed for a wide variety of different reasons. And the relative importance of sexual attraction, sexual experiences, love and affection differed enormously from person to person.

Among the circumstances conducive to bisexuality, the study highlighted threesomes; ideological positions for example humanism, libertarianism and feminism; and sex with close friends. The latter seemed to be the most appropriate for women.

Two major differences between women's and men's reactions to bisexuality are highlighted. Women appear to be less likely than men to adopt a gay identity as a result of just a few homosexual experiences. But their first lesbian sexual experiences tended to be much less traumatic than first gay experiences for men, who were often concerned about the implications for their masculinity.

Those who took part in the study were students at the university and friends of friends among members of local bisexual groups. As an aside, Blumstein and Schwartz predicted a great increase in the size of the visible bisexual community. But this research is already a few years old and who knows when the suggestion for further work will be taken up.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH,

FEBRUARY 1986



JANUARY 26-FEBRUARY 28 "Cambridge Black History: The Invisible Years", Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center, 41 Second St., Cambridge, Mon-Fri, 12-4 PM, Thursdays 6-8 PM, 577-1400.

FEBRUARY 1 (Sat) The Black Experience on Film, Boston Public Library, Dudley Research, 65 Warren St., Roxbury, 11am - 5pm: "Say Amen, Somebody," "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," "Dance Theatre of Harlem."

FEBRUARY 1-28 "Black Women: Achievement Against the Odds, 10:00-4:00 PM daily. Check local listings.

FEBRUARY 5 (Wed) "Sisters Soul to Soul: Wanetta Jackson Sings Aretha Franklin," Cohen Auditorium, Tufts Univ., Medford, 8 PM. 381-3493, 492-8436. Sponsored by Studio Red Top.

FEBRUARY 9 (Sun) "Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad," film, 12:00 & 3:00 PM, Boston African American National Historic Site, 15 State Street.

FEBRUARY 14 & 15 (Fri/Sat) "Freedom and Angelina," presented by City Stage, depicting Angelina Grimke's fight against slavery and Southern belle for women's rights, 8 PM, Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center, 41 Second Street, Cambridge, \$7, 577-1400.

FEBRUARY 19 (Wed) The Women's Caucus for Art and the National Center for Afro-American Artists sponsors a talk by Edmund Barry Gaither on Lois Marilou Jones, Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, 300 Walnut Avenue, Boston, 7:30 PM. Preceded by short planning meeting of WCA for future Boston convention, 442-8820.

FEBRUARY 21 (Fri) Presentation of Peace Award to Winnie Mandela's daughter, Makazine, Back Bay Hilton, 12 noon.

FEBRUARY 23 (Sun) A program of spirituals, traditional and contemporary Gospel music, Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, 8PM, free, 262-1120x259.

AFFINITY GROUP FORMING

BBWN has formed an Affinity Group (women only) for the Pledge to Resistance. If you have been meaning to get involved but did not have the time or felt intimidated to join mixed groups of strangers, now is your chance to show your commitment to stopping U.S. intervention in Central America and join a supportive group of women. We meet once a month and welcome new members. For information, call Robyn at 491-8334.

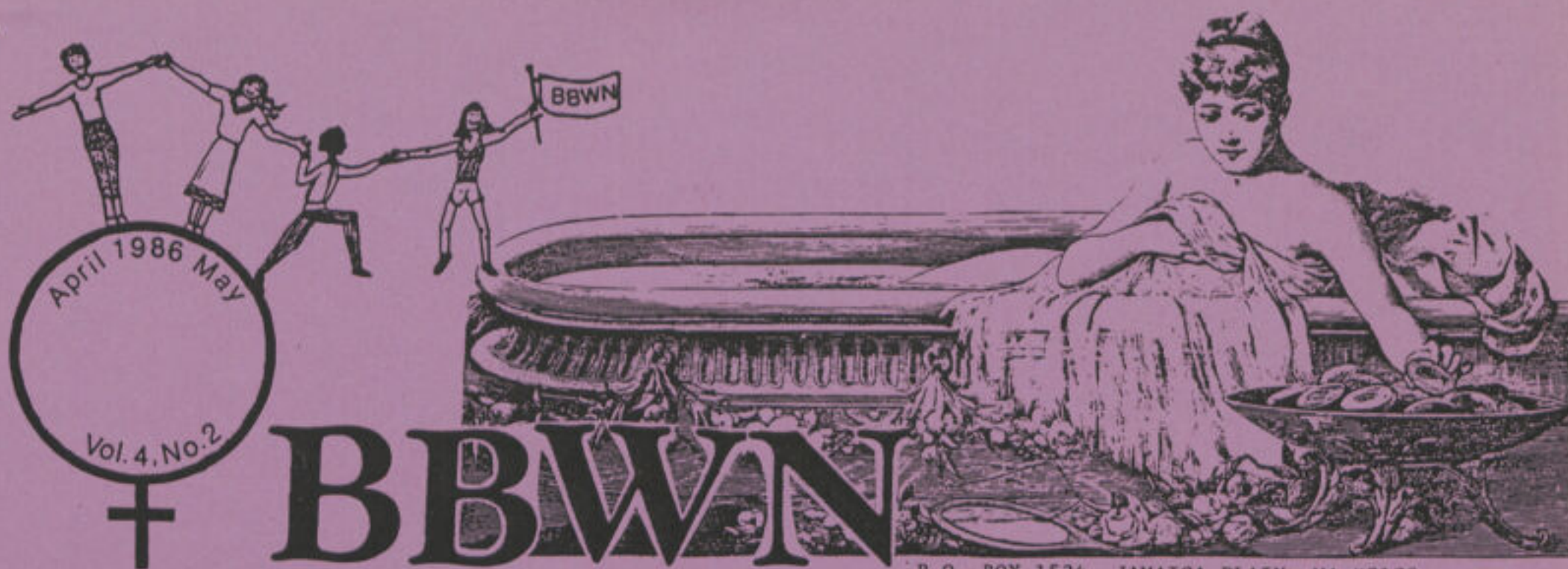
(*BOWN EVENTS)

FEBRUARY 22 (Sat) Pot luck dinner at Sharon's house (our new treasurer); 17 Peverall St., Dorchester, 7:00, 265-4318. All invited!

APRIL 9 (Wed) "Bisexuality: Information & Appreciation," Lifeline Inst., 664 Main St., Amherst, 413/253-2822, 6:30-8:30 PM, \$3 suggested donation.

!!!!\$\$\$\$!!!!!!\$\$\$\$!!!!!!\$\$\$\$!!!!!!\$\$\$\$\$!!!!!!\$\$\$\$\$!!!!!!\$\$\$\$\$!!!!!!

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The Problem With Underwear

"It's overpriced, cut too skimpily, and rides up. I buy men's now," said one woman. "Men's underwear is boring and unsensual; I prefer panty hose," countered a man (who had actually been taken to an emergency room with his panty hose on under his professional men's suit and had lived to tell the tale!). More women chimed in with the fact that men's shirts and pants were usually cheaper and more comfortable, even though they were the exceptions in the underwear department. "Personally, I like to dress up as a man sometimes, but I like wearing slinky camisoles underneath," said the last woman.

Well, I was taught in my Bread and Roses group in 1970 that the "personal is the political," so it was fitting that we should be discussing the things closest to us at this workshop on Androgyny at the 3rd Annual Bisexual Conference in Portland, Maine.

As the facilitator of this group, I was hoping to touch on the physical aspects of gynandrogyny (let's put women first!) and then move on to the more lush political and ethical questions. Let's talk privilege and power, let's talk of the economic underpinnings of male uniforms and female fussing. Many of the men there "didn't want to talk politics," but they listened and nodded sympathetically as very "political" individual stories from various women emerged. "I have a male sort of first name, so when salespeople call me up and talk, their tone changes immediately when they hear my female voice. It gets more condescending and uninterested in what I have to say." "I'm a professional woman, and if I dress too severely, I'll be laughed at, but if I dress too frilly, I won't be taken seriously either—they assume I'm an incompetent decoration."

I considered these stories to be meaty and liberating, but only a first step. A two-hour workshop was just enough for each person to take a few minutes to tell her/his story of deviating from sex role expectations, and their coming to accept this "deviance" as their natural state, not something awful. It was an "I'm OK" workshop, or in academic terms, "Androgyny 101." But where was the discussion of male privilege, straight privilege, white privilege, and class privilege?

(Continued on page 8)

Conference Memorandum

Memorandum: To all members (and their friends) of BBWN
Subject: The Third Regional Conference on Bisexuality, March 7-9, 1986

Location: University of Southern Maine, Portland

Population: One-hundred and twenty-five

The one-hundred and twenty-five participants truly lived up to the title "regional", for not only were the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, and New York represented, but also New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Illinois, and Missouri. Welcome, welcome!!

Conference: The conference had three separate workshop periods: Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday morning.

The Saturday morning workshops began with Affinity Groups: Lesbian-identified women, Women-identified women, Gay-identified men, Feminist men, Bisexuals, Considering Bisexuality, Married People and Parents, Friends and Allies of Bisexuals, People over 35, and Bisexuality and Sobriety. The Affinity Groups were established to give those attending a safe place to begin the conference and join in conversation around a common interest.

The Saturday afternoon workshops followed lunch, and revolved around the issues of "Identity, Family, and Relationships." The following eight workshops were held: Bisexuality 101, Coming Out, Relationship Alternatives/ Building Your Own Family, Personal Feminism, Lesbian Sexuality(women only), Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex (a very popular workshop), Bisexuals and AIDS/ARC, and S/M.

The Sunday morning workshops focused on "Politics and Our Community." The following five workshops were held: Bisexual Book Project, Care and Feeding of a Bisexual Network, Politics of Sexuality, Androgyny: Challenging Gender Culture, and Positive Erotica (Not a Debate on Pornography).

\$\$\$\$\$: The Conference was a financial success and enough money was generated to make the upcoming summer retreat possible! (Watch the newsletter for details).

(continued on page 2)

The newsletter of The Boston Bisexual Women's Network

BBWN News

NEWSLETTER STAFF FOR THIS ISSUE: Blake Walton, Managing Editor.; Laura Sachs, Co-editor, layout; Betty Aubut, Calendar Editor; Contributors: Betty Aubut, Betty's MacIntosh, Marcia Deihl, Robyn Ochs, Sharon G., Stacie, Eliss Malcohn, Karen C., Laura Sachs, Mary-Charlotte Domandi, Sylvia S., Terri M.



TREASURER'S REPORT 3/16/86

Balance as of January 1, 1986	\$773.12
EXPENSES:	
Printing	254.89
Bulk Mail Annual Additional Fee	10.00
Mailings-- Jan. Newsletter, Conference mailing (to be reimbursed), March newsletter	300.00
Postage Due Account	38.61
Int'l. Women's Day Sponsorship	25.00
Supplies	51.00
Total Expenses:	\$679.50
INCOME:	
Membership Dues/Advertising Fees	\$429.00
Checking Account Interest	4.86
Total Income:	\$433.86
Balance as of March 16, 1986	\$527.48

CC Minutes, 2/23/86

Present: Betty Aubut, Robyn Ochs, Sharon G., Eve C., Sylvia S., Cathy Cummings.

- 1) Need for annual fundraising cycle--Fall campaign with spring reminders to women who haven't paid annual dues yet.
- 2) Sylvia is resigning from the CC; she will be available in an advisory capacity.
- 3) Next two general meetings discussed and organized.
- 4) Robyn is hoping to organize a BBWN-sponsored workshop emphasizing leadership and facilitation skills. Target date is June.
- 5) Upcoming requests for speakers discussed for: a) Northeast Gay and Lesbian Students Association conference, March 1-2; and b) workshop at Wesleyan University in April as part of Gay-Lesbian Awareness Week.
- 6) Cathy updated CC on the Northeast Regional Comm. on Bisexuality conference, March 7 - 9, in Portland, ME.
- 7) Summer retreat will be scheduled at Another Place Farm in Greenville, NH. Inclusion of men for this event is contingent upon male participation in organizing the weekend. August 1st-3rd not available. Betty setting up committee to organize this event - call 497-9555 to help.
- 8) Betty has resigned as advertising coordinator of the newsletter; Blake will assume interim responsibilities. Betty has done extensive research on finding a new printer who will hopefully do a better job than Sir Speedy. Price estimates ran from \$135-\$655! (Good work, Betty!)

--Sylvia S. (edited by Robyn O.)

Bi Conference (continued from page 1)

Other Notes: It was one of the coldest weekends of the year but "only in temperature, not in spirit!"

Entertainment: The coffehouse Saturday night was a smashing success! Special thanks, love, hugs and kisses to the following performers: Joanne T., Susie J., Ben S., Ruth L., Marcia D., Ray S., and Eve D. You were all marvelous and exciting to see and hear (next year we videotape you for posterity!).

Special thanks also to Alan S. and Ruth L. (double duty) for letting me instantly press you into service on sound and lights.

The dance (alcohol-, drug- and smoke-free) after the coffehouse on Saturday night was also a smashing success! We all seemed to ascribe to the motto, "Dance until you konk out, sit and talk, then get up and boogie some more!"

Special Mention: Tremendous thanks, warmth, affection and love to the following for all their hard work and non-egotistical cooperation, and above all, our spectacular ability to find dates that either 100 per cent of us or at least 99 per cent could agree upon to have conference meetings beginning October 6, 1985, to see the Third Regional Conference into reality: Mary-Charlotte D., Beth I., Cathy C., Pepper G., Ginny L., Schultz, Steve K., Ray S., Alan H., Nancy K., and Sharon G.

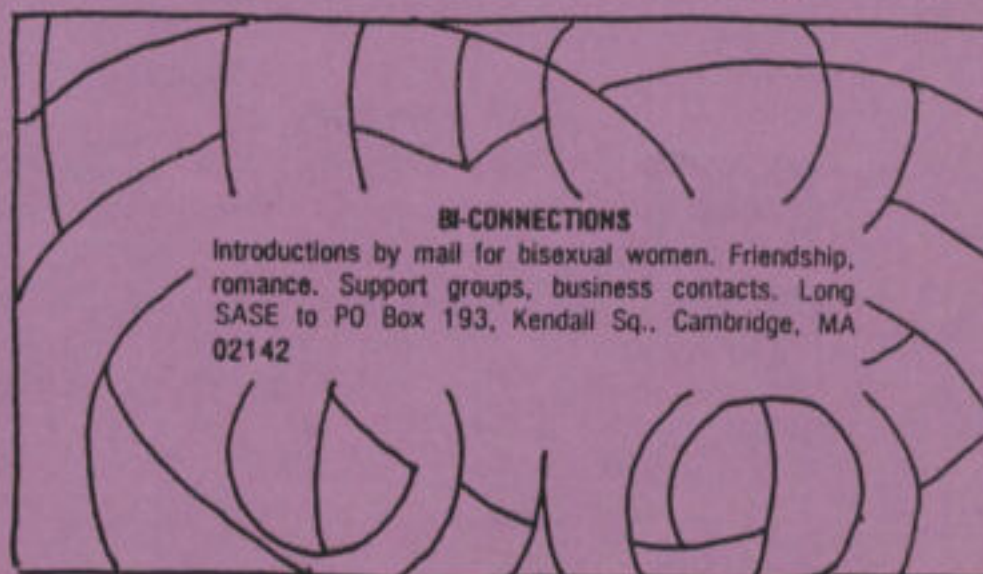
Thanks also to the following: Robyn Ochs for your advice and support and for letting us use your home as a central place to have conference meetings; and to Susie S. for teaching us with great humor and patience how to facilitate workshops; and to all those who facilitated workshops.

Apologies and thanks to anyone I may have forgotten to mention above, and thanks to all those who have read this far.

A Personal Note: I had great time working with everyone from the beginning of the process, and I learned a great deal about myself and those around me as the work and the fun and the craziness of putting on the conference progressed. I was feeling a little sad after the conference, but I'm ecstatic that it was such a success! I heartily recommend working on next year's conference as a great way to get involved with and learn about the Network, and I can't wait until next year! See you all at the retreat.

--Love, Laura Sachs

(MORE CONFERENCE NOTES, pp. 4-5)



Reader's Forum

Dear BBWN Readers,

This letter is written as a response to the excerpts of Kit Womantree's provocative article, "The Politics of Feminist Bisexuality," printed in the Feb/March 1986 issue of the BBWN newsletter. As a lesbian reader of the newsletter and as a woman supportive of the work and goals of the BBWN, I would like to continue the discussion begun by Kit's article by responding to several points at which I disagree with her analysis of lesbian reality and bi/gay/straight politics. I hope other women will continue this discussion in future editions of the newsletter.

"Lesbians Have Male Privilege"

I do not agree with Kit's claim that lesbians have or can have male privilege within this society, whether we wear men's clothes, do traditionally-defined "men's" work, or have more than one lover—all things which Kit points to as illustrative of lesbians "copping male privilege." I personally feel *less* safe and privileged the further I move out of acceptable female roles (a woman was recently pulled out of her car and beaten in a Boston suburb for "looking like a lesbian"). Being overtly lesbian in public is an incredibly high-risk statement about one's sexuality. To say that any lesbian gets male privilege from this is distorting the realities of our lives.

Kit might actually be referring more to a set of attitudes among the lesbians with whom she interacts than to a system of privilege: that which she is labeling "male privilege" might rather be expressions of misogyny or the devaluing of women—of which lesbians are often no more immune than other women raised in a misogynist culture. Although misogyny does exist within the lesbian world, however, I do *not* think that it is nearly as extensive as within the straight world, which is why many women continue to be drawn to "radical women's communities" that are often lesbian—the dominant straight world *is* patriarchal, and thus is not a healthy place for women, regardless of with whom you sleep.

"Dyke Chauvinism and Homophobia are Two Sides of the Same Coin"

I do not feel the efforts of any oppressed people to maintain a community and sense of pride in themselves as a people can be equated with the forces that have historically kept them oppressed. This applies to Jewish people, Black people, women and gays. The efforts of any group to maintain space for itself within a culture that does not welcome it are often considered "chauvinistic" or exclusive by those who are not



included. It is dangerous to equate homophobia, which has resulted in the deaths of many people and the continued harassment of many others, with the efforts of gay and lesbian people to create a community for themselves in which they can feel safe and "at home" in an otherwise hostile world.

Points of Tension Between Bisexual and Lesbian Women

It is important in a discussion of issues between lesbian and bisexual women to acknowledge that there *are* differences between women living as bisexual, as straight, and as lesbians within this society—and that women in each group experience distinct problems and issues due to these differences. It is also important to acknowledge that tension between members of these three groups is inevitable as long as we are living within a patriarchal, homophobic society in which sleeping with men is rewarded economically and socially, and sleeping with women is punished. The question is how to work beyond these differences to create a world in which all of us will feel safe, and in which who we love and the sexual choices we make will not determine our ability to survive and live full and creative lives. To do this requires approaching each other with a mutual respect and sensitivity to each other's situation as well as an awareness of how patriarchal and homophobic oppression impact our lives differently on the basis of our sexual choices. To work beyond difference involves understanding oppression and privilege, and having the courage to be honest with each other about how these forces affect our lives and perceptions of each other.

I would like to address three points in Kit's article that need to be challenged in a discussion of lesbian/bi politics. The first is Kit's claim that "the lesbian 'strike' against men" gives straight and bi women more leverage in their relationships with men—a statement which points to an area of tension that exists between bisexual and lesbian women on both personal and political grounds. Kit writes of telling men, "Shape up, Jack—I can always ship out," which reflects the attitude that many lesbians fear in bisexual women: that ultimately bisexual women prefer to be with men, but women are a good second best when men refuse to "shape up." Using lesbianism as leverage in relationships with men is insulting to lesbian women, trivializing the depth and seriousness of our feelings towards women by using them to gain favors from men. And on the political level, *if* lesbians are to be viewed as courageously "on strike" against men—as Kit asserts—then why aren't bisexual and straight women honoring our picket?

Second, Kit states that bisexual and straight women (unlike lesbians) "can't see only half a human race in our vision of a revolutionary future." This implies that lesbian lives and visions are inherently partial because we do not sleep with men, reflecting bisexual chauvinism which is at its roots homophobic. Because a woman is a lesbian does not necessarily mean that she does not want or have men in her life or

(Continued on page 9)

Outrageous Women

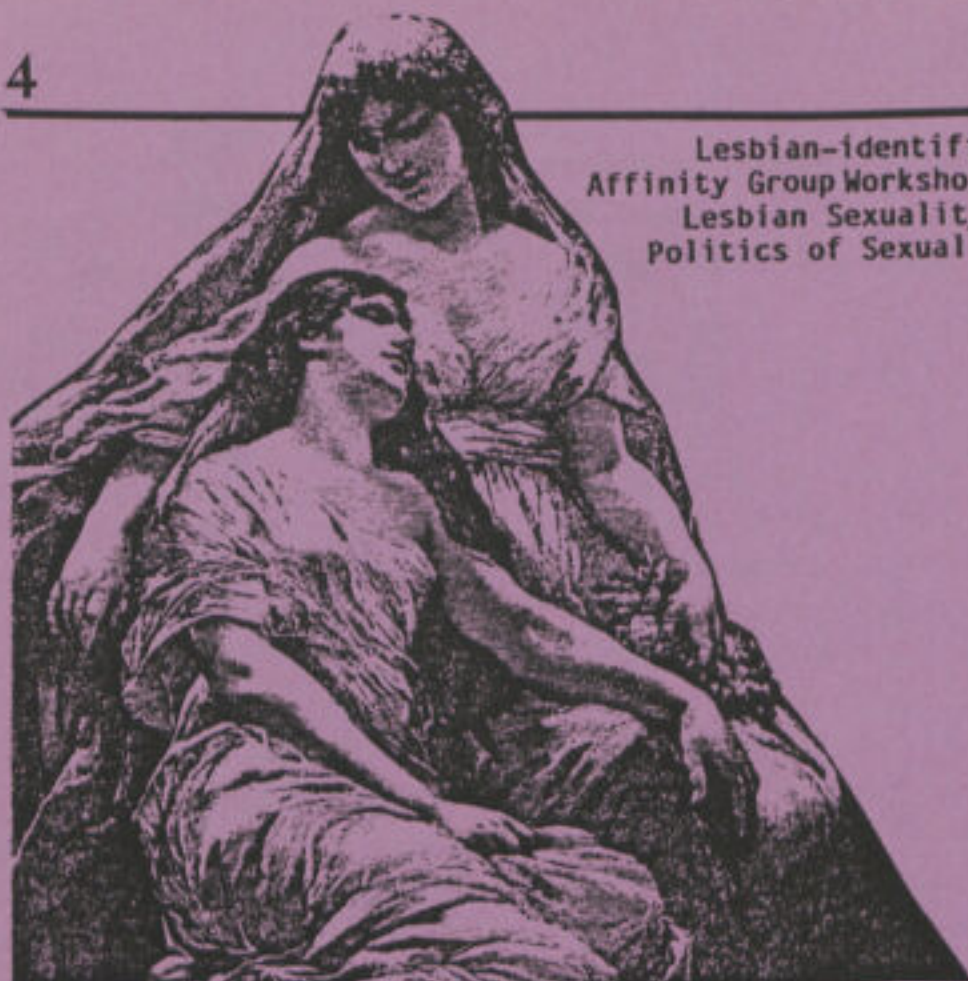
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Lesbian-identified
Affinity Group Workshops:
Lesbian Sexuality &
Politics of Sexuality

What makes the Third Annual Northeast Conference on Bisexuality what it is? The breakfasts and dinners -- the entertainment -- the excitement of meeting others who feel like family. My first event of the conference was stumbling onto a cocktail party just around the corner from the Registration Desk, which turned out to be part of the Woman's History Week! A bit embarrassing after greeting many people with wine glasses in hand, asking them how they heard about the bisexuality conference!

I'll skip now to describe my experiences at the lesbian-identified affinity group and the two workshops I attended. Why do women who identify as lesbians go to a bisexuality conference? There were about 10 of us in the room, each with a different answer. Most of our relationships at the present time were with women; after that the similarity ended. One woman had affairs with men when not seriously involved with women. Another, in a non-monogamous long-term lesbian relationship, had recently begun a sexual involvement with a man. One woman, now involved with a bisexual woman, was here to discuss her feelings about the situation. Some of us had led exclusively lesbian lives for a number of years and were wondering if we'd closed off important parts of ourselves. Whether or not we would act on our sexual attractions for men, acknowledging them were important to us.

Our personal herstories contributed to our diverse opinions. For some, coming out was relaxed and easy and relationships with women refreshingly egalitarian. Others found sexual awakening and coming out difficult, and lesbian relationships fraught with many of the same difficulties as straight ones. We also discussed reasons lesbians don't accept bisexual women, such as fear that she'd leave for a man or desire to preserve woman-only space. We questioned the reality of "heterosexual privilege," wondering whether any women could really have it. We discussed the sorrows in our lives, such as family histories of alcoholism, incest or physical abuse, and the joys of our relationships, our work and our lives.

I chose next to go to the Lesbian Sexuality workshop. Somehow I'd figured that the Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex workshop would be more graphic and freewheeling, and I wanted that. On the other hand, I needed to hear women talk about sex with women and I hoped to get that here.

Mostly, we filled over two hours discussing our feelings about entering into relationships. We spoke about the steps to getting together with other women. How do you know when a woman likes you? How will a woman react if you come on to her? Many spoke of the difficult predicament of becoming attracted to straight

women or to lesbian friends who did not reciprocate the feelings.

Even those who found mating easy said it was hard to get accustomed to lesbian culture. And a few women, new to same-sex involvements, voiced anxieties about whether or not they would be accepted by more sexually experienced women. Even when experienced with men, they worried that here they would not be "technically competent" and that made them hesitant to enter into lesbian sex. One woman advised getting to know someone and trusting her before becoming sexually involved. Another asked, "What's wrong with a novice?"

Towards the very end, the group spoke a little bit about sexual acts, such as how individual women felt about penetration. But overall, the emphasis of this workshop was on emotions. Clearly I was very involved in our discussion, but I felt that next time I would like to attend a workshop more centered around lesbian sexual acts. If that doesn't turn up, I guess I'll wind up in Everything You Always Wanted to Know, a mixed workshop. Could be I'll know a little more by next year, too.

On Sunday morning, I chose to attend the Politics of Sexuality, which turned out to be a very sophisticated and challenging discussion. Excited, though respectful, debate arose at points. I found it refreshing that we could disagree with each other and still maintain the comradery that was the hallmark of this gathering of bisexuals. We pretty much reached a consensus that declaring our bisexuality was political. There were group members who chose to call themselves lesbian or gay when they felt they had to challenge homophobia in straight settings. We brainstormed on how to make the "bisexual" label more politicized, how to turn around the bi-image of swinging trendsetters to a bi-image of a cohesive group proud of being part of both gay and straight communities, and aligned with gay/lesbian struggles. We voiced fears of coming out on the job and also the thrill of coming out whenever we dared to. We questioned how to describe ourselves even to each other -- could we actually say there were bisexual and straight "parts" of ourselves? Or didn't our feelings inside us feel more cohesive than that? Lastly, we connected the recent Massachusetts foster care policy decisions to disbelief in our membership in the full human community and to attacks on our right to live as we chose to.

Could I return to the microworld I have constructed for myself in Cambridge and to the macroworld of the "straight" job I would face on Monday without some regret? Bisexuals once again proved to be challenging and open-minded people. For my part, that's a good enough reason why this lesbian-identified woman attended the Third Annual Northeast Conference on Bisexuality.

Report by Stacie

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CONFERENCE NOTES

This year's Northeast Regional Conference on Bisexuality, held in Portland, Maine, was the third conference of its kind in as many years. People came not only from New England, but from as far away as St. Louis, Chicago, Pennsylvania, and Virginia to connect with what is probably the most active community of bisexuals in the country, the bi's of Boston and the northeast. The activities of the two days of centered around three sets of workshops which covered topics such as "The Politics of Sexuality," "Coming Out," and "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex." During breaks, during meals, in fact during every waking moment, there were discussion groups and informal get-togethers that furthered the discussion on subjects brought up in and out of the workshops. In addition, the conference sponsored entertainment and a dance--all of which provided a very high-energy atmosphere in which to talk about our most urgent bisexual questions and have a marvelous time.

These have been three long years since the first conference, years in which bisexuality has gotten a good deal of much needed publicity within the gay community as well as (though I think to a lesser extent) in the straight world. Many people, at least in the Boston area, have begun to use the bisexual label to describe ourselves, and have acknowledged our bisexuality to our friends and community. Bisexuals are coming out of the closet within the closet: We are claiming our separate identity to the gay community, which had, for many, served as our first haven in a world that otherwise dismissed us as sexual weirdos. But now we have begun to say that we are not gay, much as we may support gay causes, politics, lifestyle. We have begun to affirm ourselves as strong individuals--*not* wishy-washy fence-sitters; *not* lesbians afraid to come out, *not* straights out for a little erotic variety. We have begun to deal with our "masculine" and "feminine" qualities, with our roles as women, with our relationships with men and women. We have connected to each other via the network, in support groups, through the conference, through gay organizations that no longer consider bisexuality politically or emotionally unacceptable.

This year's conference reflected the progress that the bisexual movement has made even in the last year. Workshops and discussion groups went beyond the basic--though important--issues of sexual identification



and strengthening bisexual communities that were central to last year's program. (Last year, workshops had titles such as "Women Relating to Women," "Men Relating to Men," "Men Relating to Women," "Women and Men Relating to Each Other," "Bisexual Pride," and so on.) This year, in addition to workshops such as "Bisexuality 101" and "Considering Bisexuality," there were workshops whose discussion went beyond our basic gender choices into the realm of families, politics, and the erotic world.

Four workshops, all well-attended and thought-provoking, dealt explicitly with sex: "Lesbian Sexuality," "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex," "S/M," and "Positive Erotica." In each of these, participants had the chance to talk about their sexual feelings in a "safe" context, and to explore sensitive issues, as well as to share fantasies and positive sexual experiences. "Androgyny" dealt with the relationship of masculinity and femininity to sexual preference and attraction. A very successful workshop called "Building Your Own Family/Relationship Alternatives" had three leaders who discussed their experiences of single and co-parenting, extended families, intentional communities, and bisexuality within traditional marriage; participants shared their ideas and visions for future ways to live. "Personal Feminism," led by a man, was attended by both sexes and dealt with the problem of being fulfilled people while living in a patriarchy. Also, in continuation of last year's program, there were workshops on AIDS/ARC, on building a bisexual network, on the bisexual anthology project.

Unfortunately, one could attend only three workshops out of this tempting variety. In the end I opted for "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex," an open and unembarrassed (mostly) discussion about many aspects of sex, from role-playing, to dating, to oral sex, to after-glow. There we were, in a room with women and men who had slept with both women and men, discussing erotic preferences, fantasies, and anything else we could think of. Not only was it informative (I won't go into detail here), but it knocked down some of my long-held generalizations about how women and men differ sexually. Sometimes women said what I considered typically male things, and men had typically female responses; other times people seemed to fit into my slots about how Things Are. But during the process I realized that by having preconceived ideas about sex, I set myself up to miss the subtleties of each individual person. In any case, the workshop went over so well that there is discussion of doing the same type of

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SILENT SACRIFICE

(reprinted from Bi-monthly, London, England)

by David Smith

1985 has been a year of progress for the world-wide bisexual community. As the London Bisexual Group celebrates its fourth birthday, other groups are springing up all over the world. And this year must hold the record for the number of bisexual conferences. The lesbian and gay community is cautiously opening doors, as the all-embracing concept of the 'sexual fringe' gains acceptance.

And yet sixty-seven percent of the population disapprove of bisexuality, and this is not likely to be changed by doctors warning the public that bisexuals will be the people to spread AIDS to the 'population at large.' As if we weren't part of that population.

In comparison to the lesbian and gay movement, the bisexual community is minute and in less of a position to cope with the potential crisis of homophobic reaction to AIDS. There are only five bisexual support/social groups in the whole of Britain none of which have their own premises or facilities. None receive any funding from central or local government. Apart from weekly meetings in The Fallen Angel, the London Bisexual Group has to fulfill the function of information and counseling service, lobbying body and advice centre. It organizes conferences, sponsors BI-MONTHLY and supports all of the other bisexual groups in the country. It survives finally entirely through donations from people who attend group meetings and it relies solely on volunteers to do the work.

The discrepancy between the relative sizes of the bisexual and gay communities exists perhaps only as a result of confusion over labels. Many gay-identified bisexuals make use of the current facilities of the gay scene and in innumerable cases contribute constructively to the movement. Open declaration of bisexuality in such situations brings unpredictable reactions. But the consistent minimising of bisexuality in books and periodicals by for and about lesbians and gay men cannot simply be explained as a result of confusion.

The cry of 'conspiracy of silence' is not an empty challenge. Why are there so few books about bisexuality? Why does the British Library have only three entries under 'bisexuality' in its catalogue? How can a book entitled SEXUALITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS written by gay historian and theorist Jeffrey Weeks have only four references to bisexuality? Has bisexuality been sacrificed on the altar of law reform?

BI-MONTHLY is stark living proof of the silence. It is the only magazine aimed specifically at bisexuals in the whole of Europe. And in the current uncertain climate it has a very important role to play in informing, entertaining and supporting the bisexual community and an even wider role in educating society about our very existence.

Like everything else in the bisexual community BI-MONTHLY is unsubsidised. This issue was the work of a very small team of people, most of whom were learning skills on the job. But to fulfil our role seriously and adequately we need the help of many more people to send us accounts of their own personal experiences; to write about films, television, video, books, theatre, poetry, and the visual arts. We want small pieces of news, major features and illustrations. We need people to scan the other publications they read

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IN SUPPORT OF ENDEAVOR

(excerpted from a letter to Bi-Monthly)

What strikes me particularly is that with this [newsletter] exchange, our endeavors become just that bit more global. I hesitate to say "struggle" at this point — not because I don't think it applies, I do; but because it's time to endeavor, with all the positive, optimistic strength that word entails despite all hardships. You are doing tremendous work; that and your very existence are cause for celebration!

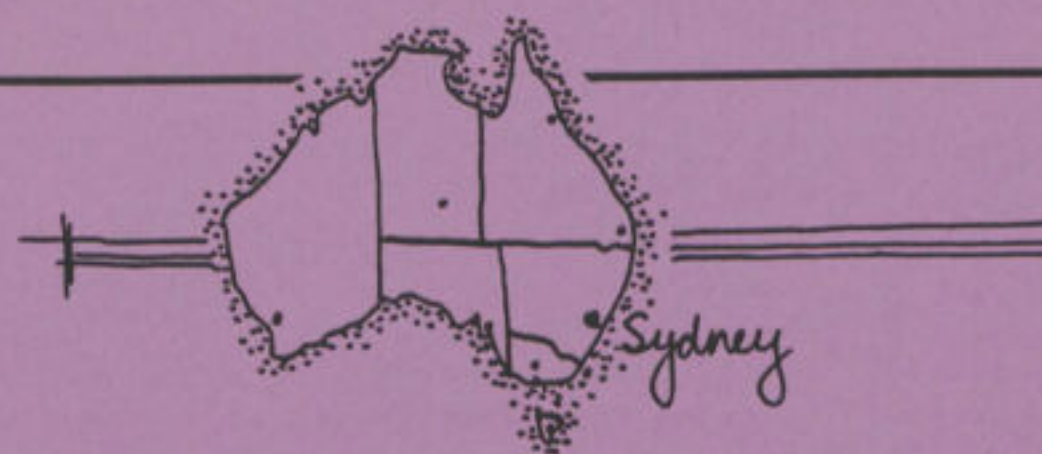
Right now, I'm listening to a cassette tape of the music from a group called Hiroshima. Imagine — a blend of Eastern and Western artistry composed and performed under a label that stands for one of the most terrifying, abhorrent holocausts known to humankind. The first time I heard their music, their synthesis of sound and power overwhelmed me. What stood for death now stands not only for life, but for an extraordinary creative force and the triumph of survivors. They are a beautiful example that shows we, too, can overcome anything, and with a sense of wonder.

At the same time I have just received a copy of Proper Boskonian, which is a publication in the field of science fiction fandom. In it, there is an article despairing of the factionalism within fandom, and the jargon used therein can easily be translated to relate to any in-group, from academia to politics to sexuality. Here, too, I saw vast parallels — not only within groups that are currently "struggling" but every kind of group you can think of from time immemorial. Factionalism is a phenomenon that we need to recognize as universal; once we do that, we can work to use it to our advantage. The advantage is that we can creatively challenge each other with our separate interests and viewpoints, can enter into lively debate that results in our growth as people as well as bisexuals. Schizm — the "struggle" — does not help us, nor are we alone with it; it's part of the human condition. Debate and sharing and the growth therefrom — now that's endeavor!!

In addition to word-processing the BEWN Newsletter, I edit Star*Line, the newsletter of the Science Fiction Poetry Association. We are just beginning our ninth year, naturally on a shoestring. Until I discovered the SPPA in 1980 I had been writing sf prose, but hadn't realized sf poetry existed (sound familiar?) and was enthralled. SF poetry, too, has had its "legitimacy" questioned, and is still shut out of some forums. Finally there are a few excellent anthologies out that educate the public about this art form. While there are degrees of endeavor to be considered — a teacher can be fired in Oklahoma for being bisexual but not necessarily for writing sf poetry — there is the same need for steadfastness, patience, and good humor. I see all of us as visionaries.

As for being noticed as bisexuals, I am happy to report (this goes under "accounts of personal experiences") that I have recently come out to my next door neighbor, who has four young children and is a Born-Again Christian. She and I have debated on everything from abortion to homosexuality to the rifts among churches. She talks to angels and I talk to the Goddess. She has a sticker proclaiming love for Jesus and I have a sticker remembering the Salem witch trials. We have differed on how we view the words 'witch' and 'pagan' but we recognize where our biases come from; what is important

(Continued on page 9)



Dear BBWN,

G'day, Mate! This is an on-the-spot report from me, [redacted] your BBWN foreign correspondent in Sydney, Australia. It is December 26th, 80 degrees and sunny. I am sitting on a city beach watching a sailboat race. The warm weather feels strange at Christmastime, but I'm not complaining.

How did I get here? Let's see... Before I left Boston last March I designed and put together the newsletter for a year and a half and worked on the BBWN conference. Careerwise, two years in the art department of a high pressure advertising agency had burned me out and made me restless to travel and enjoy life more. Australia had always intrigued me and it seemed a fitting time to take off. I arranged a tentative design job in a Sydney agency, quit my Boston job, gave up my apartment, stored my furniture, left a relationship, and reluctantly said goodbye to all my BBWN friends. I crossed the U.S. stopping in St. Paul and San Diego; then flew to Fiji, New Zealand, and finally arrived in "The Lucky Country."

Australia is a brash, young, masculine country just learning to believe in itself. It idolizes the U.S. yet resents us at the same time. There is a population of 15 million, the same as New York City, but spread out over an island continent roughly the same size as the U.S. There is much room to grow here. Six national parks are within an hour drive of the city center. The lifestyle is slower and more time is spent outdoors. Australia is an incredibly beautiful country of great diversity-- from parched red desert to lush tropical rain forest. I'm very glad I came here.

The women's community is not cohesive. There is much less a sense of unity or "community" than in Boston. I have had fun dancing in the women's bars and was always welcomed when I said I was an American here on my own. Varied groups have dances or socials but it seems more dispersed. Two women's health centers provide services free or at a scaled rate. The lesbian community is not organized to be a political force nor is it politically savvy. There are no lesbians or gays visible in straight politics. I have individual lesbian and feminist friends but no network as I felt in Boston. I realize how special and how effective we (BBWN) are as a group and I miss that.

Professional women are less the norm here than in the States, but their numbers are growing. I am the only woman in my office of six people. Tradition plays a stronger part in women's lives here. There are local professional women's groups for lesbians but they scared me off, appearing small and insular. Perhaps I am wrong. If I stay much longer I may explore these groups further.

AIDS is in the paper every other day. People are quite paranoid but rather uneducated. The government is

responding by funding research and taking precautions rather than ignoring it. All donated blood is tested for AIDS. Safe sex booklets are in some bars and health care centers. An AIDS action committee of sorts gives support and information and has a telephone hotline. The access to such information is quite invisible to straights, however. Gay men are somewhat more organized than lesbians but have little political clout. The number of people with AIDS is growing more rapidly than previously predicted. Much more needs to be done. The problem is even worse in New Zealand because gays are more closeted.

Clothing is quite different here. The culture in general is more relaxed and easy because of the warm weather. "No worries, Mate!" is a common cry. Clothes are softer and looser. Cotton and cotton blends in knits or weaves are the preferred fabrics, suiting the heat. Consequently, people dress with color in mind, not varied fabric or textures as we tend to do in the U.S. It is rare to see women in business suits and unheard of to see them in tailored grey pinstripes! The Australian woman's dress-for-success look is not modelled after men's suits. Hurrah! It is quite acceptable for women not to wear stockings, slips or bras. I was quite delighted to see professional women bare-legged. They still wear heels, however, but in general work attire is much less formal.

Haircuts are creative and unusual here. Women wear their hair much shorter than in Boston, on the dykey side as we would define it. They don't see it that way and I enjoy their creativity.

My trip here has been wonderful though much harder than I expected. My original job fizzled and I had to find another. While I've been away, my parents separated, but luckily talked a lot and are now together again. My grandmother was diagnosed with and died of cancer since I left. My lover in the U.S. started seeing someone else. Through all this, I had no family or friends to lean on. I have matured a lot and realized I am stronger than I thought. I have seen so much and met some good people. If you are considering giving it all up and travelling around the world, I wholeheartedly suggest you do it.

Love and thoughts to all the women in BBWN!

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(Continued from page 1)

As fate, that wily goddess, would have it, I was matched for a ride home with the woman who had had the most criticism of my workshop. We tried to envision what an "Androgyny 500" level course would be like, addressing questions of sexual politics. Straight privilege: Why is Michael Jackson "safe"? Is Boy George less so, in that at least he doesn't deny his bisexual experiences? Why is it we hear more about AIDS-carriers than about the sensibility that created the Sistine Chapel ceiling?

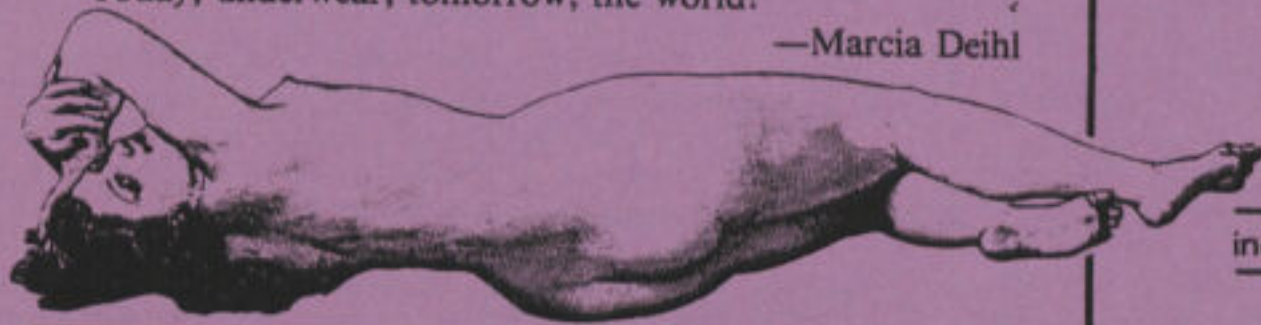
And what of male privilege? Why are all the "pretty" lesbians won over, while the "ugly" ones are killed off in the movies? Why do the armed forces (those brave Grenada-invaders) consider one of the lowest insults to be called "a woman"? Why is it that more anger is directed toward feminine men than towards masculine women? Could some men be incensed that other men chose to relinquish male privilege? Or is it that Mrs. Mythical Norm likes to wear L.L. Bean shirts, too, and lesbians don't exist anyway (they're not on prime time TV, so they're invisible). What about values and ethics? Does the planet need to get more technical and competitive, and separate, or more connected, interrelated, and hopeful?

Ah, the Problem of Underwear. I mean the larger problem of only talking about underwear, or of only talking about personal experiences of oppression. It's tempting to stay stuck in the stories if we're new to political conferences, and even if we're politically committed veterans who are tired of so much confrontation and theory. Perhaps if I had been called a "leader" and not a "facilitator" I might have nipped the stories in the bud when only 12 of the 25 people had spoken. But almost everyone there thoroughly enjoyed seeing each particular flower in this garden. And the politics did emerge, as the women articulated variations on the theme that "when gay men go home after a hard day, they go to a condo in the South End, and when lesbians go home after a hard day, it's a rental unit in Somerville." Nothing personal, men, but as long as men make \$1 for every 60 cents that women make, they can more easily afford expensive silk camisoles, if they so choose!

I hope that the discussions will be different in two or three years. But for now, I think we need the underwear level of discussion. I am glad that some of the rifts between progressive communities of men and women are being healed slowly, with some trust. We need healing, because it has often been our inside enemies (defensiveness and insecurity) that have drained energy from our outside confrontations such as the ones against the New Right. Where better to heal men and women, gay and straight, than at a bisexual workshop? We need C-R, we need healing, we need unity, we need hope. Only then can we build on our own excited personal investment to maintain the rocky journeys to come through political and ethical spheres.

Today, underwear; tomorrow, the world!

—Marcia Deihl



(Continued from page 5)

workshop at the retreat this summer, and certainly at next years conference.

I also attended the "Androgyny" workshop, a session in which a rather large group of people shared their early androgynous experiences and validated their choices to dress any way they wanted to and feel attraction to whomever they thought attractive. There was some impatience expressed that the workshop never went beyond the point of personal sharing to question the political implications of the masculine and feminine archetypes, both in the mainstream and in the bi/gay/lesbian communities. But perhaps the workshop introduced a lot of material for future discussions.

On the whole, the conference was a great success. It provided a place for people who are new to the bisexual community, or to their own bisexuality, to explore and connect with people. For those who traveled a long distance to get there, I think there was a sense of relief from the isolation of being the only one (or two or three) bi(s) around. And for those who have been thinking about bisexuality and involved with the community for a while, the conference made a start at expanding the scope of issues that we are ready to look at.

I look forward to seeing what happens next--either in conferences such as this or in other network and bisexual community activities. Many bi's are well past the coming-out stage, and would like to delve into ideas and experiences that spring from an deeper internalized sense of ourselves as bisexuals that we may not have had even a year ago, and certainly not two or three. I think we are at the start of a new stage, where we need to define what are current concerns are, and think of ways to discuss them and put them out into the community. Please let your feelings on this be known!

On a personal note, I'd like to add that I came back from the conference with a feeling that I'd never quite had in my gut before, though I've said it in my head billions of times--that is, the feeling that whatever I do and whoever I do it with it's nobody's business to comment or judge, and whatever anyone else does is nothing more or less than their personal expression. I felt that I will never again apologize for my sexuality to anyone, or try to hide what I am (a predominantly straight bisexual, among other things), and if anyone has problems with it, they can talk to me about it.

--Mary-Charlotte Domandi

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(Continued from page 3)

in her vision of the future (although it might). A person's political vision cannot necessarily be deduced from her sexual choices.

A third point I want to challenge in Kit's article is her statement that bisexual and straight women are doing the "dirty work" of the revolution. Feminists of *all* sexualities are doing our share of the dirty work of the movement towards women's liberation, and I don't think that sleeping with men necessarily constitutes a progressively political action for women within a patriarchy.

Bisexual Women and "The Lesbian Community"

Myths to the contrary, there is no *one* "Lesbian Community" in the Boston area in which a person is included or excluded, but rather many different circles in which women of a variety of sexualities and politics interact. One problem for bisexual women until recently has been that there have been only two defined "communities" to which one can belong—gay or straight—with women living as bisexual not feeling they fit into either world and thus often feeling homeless. The emergence of groups such as the BBWN provide a very much needed space and community for women who have felt caught between these two worlds. Groups such as the BBWN can also provide supportive community for feminist women who do not identify as lesbian, but for whom radical feminist politics and visions are central in their lives—a space in which women do not feel they have to sacrifice any part of themselves to participate and contribute.

The challenge of the 1980's for many of us is the development of constructive approaches to differences—whether these be differences in race, class, sexuality, or gender. I would be interested in hearing more from other women on this topic, particularly as it pertains to bisexual/straight/lesbian lives and feminist politics.

-- Karen C.

(Continued from page 6)

for news, controversy and praise. People to keep us informed.

After all the changes to the magazine in the last few months we feel we are nearing a standard which will get bisexual people noticed.

We now demand an end to the conspiracy of silence.

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Dear BBWN Women,

I just finished reading the latest issue of the BBWN newsletter and was inspired to write. I was inspired by the energy that came forth from the issue-- everyone seems so active-- organizing, expanding, and strengthening the network. I felt very nostalgic and a little homesick, too, for that spirit and support.

Reading the newsletter brought back a lot of wonderful memories. I realize how much I had in the Network. My life here in Los Angeles is very full what with school and becoming accustomed to Southern California. As you know, Los Angeles is scattered so you really begin to miss that community feeling which is such a force in Boston. But, slowly, I'm meeting some wonderful people here, too, and forming my own networks of support.

Sadly, Andi R. and I never got a bi group together out here. My excuse is school and right now it takes most of my energy. The hardest thing for me personally is being bisexual here. You don't realize the power BBWN's support provides with positive reaffirmation for being bisexual until you go somewhere where such a group doesn't exist.

I've done some research on existing bi resources here. There are several, all outside of LA in nearby (30-45 minutes) Van Nuys. I'm enclosing the information I got on them. [ed. note: in BBWN files] They are very different than BBWN. The only one I've found that's even close is a group, also in Van Nuys, that meets once a month. Of course, I haven't been able to get to their meetings so I haven't hooked up with them yet.

So, my compliments to you all-- your energy, competence, and dedication are inspiring to me out here in LALA land. I miss the spirit but the newsletter brings a lot back to me.

Thanks, Terri M., Los Angeles.



(Continued from page 6)

is that we talk and make our feelings to each other clear. She and I are close friends, part of a neighborhood support group that has arisen naturally -- and when I came out to her, my bisexuality was a moot point. This does not mean it was denied. It means that my sexuality was simply accepted as part of the person I am, along with all my other facets. She has had me over for Christmas dinner. I will have her over for Seder. If she and I can give each other mutual support, why not the rest of the world?

—Elissa Malcohn



April 5 - The Women's Center and the Alcohol Awareness Center of the downtown campus of UMASS - The College of Public and Community Service, 100 Arlington St. (near Arlington T stop) will be presenting "Issues Facing Women in the 80's" from 9 - 4 PM. The morning panel discussion will include 3 local activist women including Angela Bowen, Suzanne Lee, and Connie Panzarino. Topics for discussion will include Racism, Poverty, Ableism, Sexuality, Substance Abuse, Violence against Women and more. The afternoon workshops will focus on Substance Abuse and Stress. The conference is free to the public with lunch provided. W/C access with morning panel discussion ASL interpreted by Jodi Steiner. Call 497-9555 for info.

April 6 - Sunday concert, Allegra Productions presents **Sweet Honey in The Rock**, Strand Theatre, 543 Columbia Rd., Dorchester. 3:00 PM. All seats reserved. \$12 advance, \$13 at the door. Shuttle bus from Andrew to and from show. ASL Interpreted, W/C access. Childcare Available by reservation - call 523-3772.

April 7 - Monday - **Introductory Meeting** of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network, 7:30 PM, Cambridge Women's Center, Pleasant St., Camb. For info call 497-9555.

April 13 - The 30 piece **Lesbian and Gay Freedom Trail Band of Boston** will present a bright and lively afternoon of music including Broadway showtunes, swing era, marches and classics in an AIDS benefit for the Maine Health Foundation at the First Parish Unitarian Church, 425 Congress St., Portland, Maine from 3 - 5 PM. Tickets \$5.00 at the door.

April 27 - **BBWN Co-ordinating Committee meeting**, 6:00 PM. Everyone welcome to attend and participate in the direction of your network. Call 497-9555 for location.

April 28 - **BBWN Volunteer Night**, 7:30 P.M., Come help with odd jobs that keep the network going, meet some new friends and socialize with other bi women. We always have fun. Call 497-9555 for location.

May 1 - **Lifeline Concert**, labor/feminist musical trio from Wash. D. C., 7 - 9 PM. Sponsored by the Social Events Committee and the Women's Center at Downtown UMASS, College of Public and Community Service, 100 Arlington St., 1st floor. (2 blocks from Arlington T stop.) Admission free with UMASS ID or \$2.00 suggested donation at the door. Concert in celebration of Socialist Labor Day. W/C access with ASL Interpreter Penny Gill. For info call 956-1025 or 497-9555.

May 9 - **Duck's Breath Mystery Theatre**, Produced by Robyn Ochs, call 547-5704 for info.

May 10 - Deadline for June/July newsletter

May 16 - Allegra Productions presents **Casselberry and DuPree**, 8:00 PM, Strand Theatre, 543 Columbia Rd., Dorchester. General admission \$8 adv., Reserved seating \$10 adv. or tix avail. at door. Shuttle bus from Andrew to and from show. ASL Interpreted, W/C access. Childcare available by reservation - call 523-3772.

May 18 - The **Trans-America Bicycle Rally** has organized a New England Contingent to benefit AIDS-800 (the national AIDS Hotline). The bicyclists will begin their trip in Bangor, ME. with a stopover in Boston on May 18th enroute to New York. There is still a need for bicyclists, organizers, and accomodations. Local bicyclists may join anywhere on route. If interested please write or call "Rally '86-Cycle for Life", c/o 29 Custer St., A301, Jamaica Plain, Boston, 02130, 617-522-9194.

May 28 - **Boston Bisexual Women's Network General Meeting**, "Bi-Pride", discussion will center around bisexual participation in the Lesbian and Gay Pride March on June 14.

May 27 - ****Tuesday****, BBWN Volunteer Night. Stuffing for the June/July newsletter. A little work but alot of fun!! The more the merrier, less work for each, and more chit-chat for all. 7:30 PM. Call 497-9555 for directions.

June 9 - **BBWN Introductory Meeting** at the Cambridge Women's Center, Pleasant St., Central Square. 7:30 P.M., Call 497-9555 for info.



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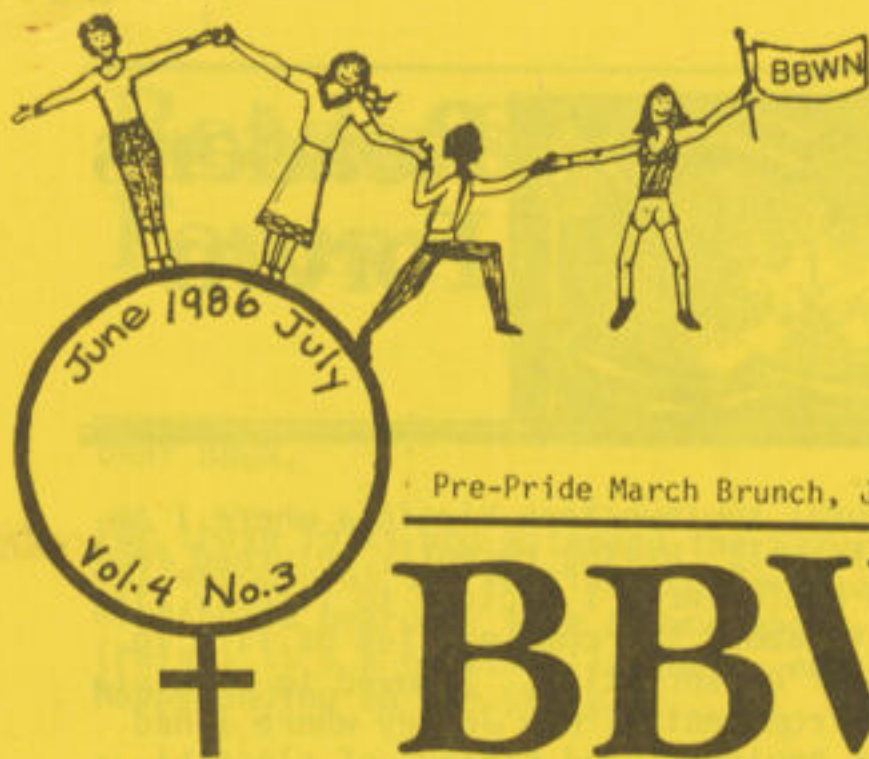
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BODYWORKS



MARGARITA ASCENCIO
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53 RIVER STREET, CAMBRIDGE, NR CENTRAL SQUARE (T)



Pre-Pride March Brunch, June 14-- Join Us!

BBWN

QUESTIONING: NOW MORE THAN EVER

By Hannah Doress. Vicki Kurtz served as muse.

It should be familiar to most people on this campus to hear the words Gay or Lesbian in conjunction with Bisexual and Questioning. Things are not so smooth in Boston. There is significant tension between the Gay and Lesbian movements and the two-year-old Bisexual movement. This is evidenced by the stereotyped conceptions of Bisexuals such as the ideas that Bisexuals are "confused," "trendy," promiscuous/indiscriminate" and that they will "dump you for that wo/man the first chance they get."

After years of travail and continued activism, the Gay and Lesbian movements have made a place for themselves conceptually. The American psyche has no digit for Bisexuality. This is even more true for the concept of Questioning, which I have not encountered outside of Wesleyan, and which is not treated as a legitimate sexual identification.

The Bisexuality movement challenges the previous categorizations of sexuality, while at the same time creating one more category for sexuality. Thus the radical challenge of the Bisexuality movement perpetuates the "boxing" of sexuality. Where there was once a Gay/Lesbian box and Straight existence without need or want of a box, now a Bisexual box is in the making. This is a necessary evil; before we are able to escape compartmentalization we must flood the market with sexuality products. I think that the Wesleyan model suggests a strategy for these groups to work together.

The names of the groups Lesbian, Bisexual and Questioning (LBQ) and Gay, Bisexual and Questioning (GBQ) suggest unity from the start. However I believe separatism is important for people in these groups, as is coalition between them. Separatism would allow these groups to define themselves and their needs and Coalition would allow them to engage in complementary strategy and to work together towards common goals.

The bisexuality movement will eventually make bisexuality a new compartment in our cultural view of sexuality, expanding the options for people, and our general view of sexuality. Thus bisexuality will become a box to contend with. Upon this success, it should be much easier for people to begin to accept the category of Questioning, which is not seen as a sexual identification, or as a state of comfort or permanence. As Questioning is new, there are no

(Continued on page 3)



"i found god in myself
and i loved her fiercely."
— Ntozake Shange

"With A Little Help From My Imaginary Friends" Bisexuality and the Persona-Work

—Elissa Malcoln

Introduction

When I was a child I created Renee — an alter ego, a fantasy playmate; sometimes a Goddess figure, always a spiritual, creative, and psychological guide. All I knew when I created her was that I needed her; she was my survival mechanism while I was growing up. Later I began to call my fantasies "persona-work," as various personas accomplished for me what I wanted to do myself. They would teach me, allow me to eventually bring my potentials out of a closed shell.

Originally, Renee was a super-heroine-type figure in a science fiction setting; later she was based on Earth. Originally she was completely platonic; later she became passionate with men; and when I was in college she had her first lesbian love affair.

At the time the fantasy below was experienced and then written, I was new to Boston, having moved here from New York. I had just come from a year of mixed traumas: mother's death, litigation with landlord and co-op fight, homelessness, legal separation (the fantasy took place the day before what would have been my anniversary with my ex husband), relocation, new job, flashbacks pointing to child sexual abuse. I needed Renee once again. Four months before, I'd had my first lesbian experience, a confirmation of my bisexuality.

Fantasy, 4 August 1983

The territory is familiar enough to me; nowhere else is quite as appropriate as Greenwich Village for my visit. I gamble on the possibility that Renee may or may not be home, at her home apartment, her Earth base, on Spring Street. I have given her a corner building that I have not been able to find in real life, a third floor walkup, battered mailbox in the lobby by the stairs. Her apartment is one living room, furnished with wooden bookshelves, catty corner in design, by a picture window facing out onto a street I have never seen. She has a mattress on the floor, a small lamp next to the mattress. The rest of the living room is lined with wooden

(Continued on page 6)

The newsletter of The Boston Bisexual Women's Network

NEWSLETTER STAFF FOR THIS ISSUE

Blake Walton, Managing Editor, layout; Laura Sachs, Co-Editor, typing, layout. Contributors: Elissa Malcohn, Hannah Doress; special thanks to SOJOURNER for the reprint of the article by Ruth Hubbard.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Balance as of 3/16	\$527.48
Expenses	
Printing	267.91
Postage	44.00
Bulk Mail Account at Post Office	100.00
Checking Account service Charges	3.90
	\$415.41
Income	
Membership Dues	252.00
Checking Account Interest	2.51
Reimbursement for Conference Mailing	107.00
	\$361.51
Balance as of 5/20	\$473.58



Reader's Forum

Dear Sisters,

Hello from rural southwestern Virginia where I am in graduate school. Having recently returned from the Portland Conference, I decided to finally sit down and write about the complexities of life in this bastion of conservatism. I moved to Virginia in September from central New Jersey where I had the luxury of having a good handful of close bisexual friends and outlets via the New York bi-women's network, when needed. Being gay is very different here than what I was used to in New Jersey. Folks are much more closeted; the gay student group doesn't even advertise where their meetings are held. I am fortunate in having a gay male friend in my department, who is also out, and together we battle the rampant homophobia at Tech.

I have not yet met another openly bisexual person. I have met a few lesbians and gay men, but no one (besides my friend John) with whom I feel connected. I live in a small university town surrounded by farms and rural communities. The nearest city, Roanoke, is one hour away. It has one gay bar (with a fairly large dance floor) in which one side is occupied by women, the other by men. Mingling back and forth is frowned on. Roanoke has a large lesbian community which holds regular gatherings the first Friday of each month. It seems like a pretty good deal for lesbians, but after some women I was speaking to made derogatory comments about bisexual women, I haven't much felt like going back.

The Maine Conference was an energizing experience for me. It felt great to be with people who understood this important part of me if even for a weekend. Though I love and care for my lesbian and gay friends, and they me, there remains a part of me that they "just don't get". It feels really good to be with folks who get it. The arrival of the newsletter each month is a high point for me. Once again I feel connected, intrigued, and validated. If there are any other rural bi's out there on the mailing list interested in sharing ideas on how to stay bi-connected in an isolated environment, write me!

Keep the newsletter coming BBWN!

M.K. Lane Psych. Dept.
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes

C. C. Minutes, 4/27/86

Present: Mary-Charlotte Domandi, [REDACTED]
Laura Sachs, Robyn Ochs, Blake Walton.

1) Mary-Charlotte updated the status of the mailing list: a) the retreat and conference women have been added, b) the issue to enter label codes to indicate who has or has not paid their BBWN membership dues was raised but not voted on, c) the mailing list is up to 650, d) the issues re: undeliverable mail and address corrections were also brought up and are still under discussion.

2) Kate H. from GLDC gave an update re: May 16th Foster Care Rally. We agreed to supply 500 envelopes and labels for mailing with the proviso that they stuff, seal, and postmark the envelopes. Members of the CC put the labels on the mailing.

3) Telephone: getting a shared BBWN, BBMN, Northeast Regional Committee phone with an answering machine was discussed. There would be calendar listings, and a rotating responsibility as to who picks up the messages. This would be an incoming line only. This idea was endorsed, but final decisions as to location and payment are still to be resolved.

4) We briefly discussed a policy for getting "donations" if other groups want to use our mailing list, with envelopes and label costs to be reimbursed - this is still under discussion.

C.C. Minutes, 5/18/86

Present: Cathy Cummings, Laura Sachs, Robyn Ochs, Emily J., Beth I., Sharon G., [REDACTED]

1) An update was given on the status of the Summer Retreat - please see calendar and enclosed registration form.

2) BBWN Membership Survey: Please keep sending them in! We have gotten a number of them back and so far there has been a positive response to having a "Bulletin Board" in upcoming newsletters. Having an advisory board/subcommittee to provide guidelines as to what will go in the bulletin board was discussed, but has not yet been finalized. Watch newsletter for details.

3) A brief discussion was continued from the last CC meeting about establishing a policy re: charging for inserts to the newsletter and mailings for other groups to BBWN members. This discussion was tabled until the next CC meeting.

4) Buttons for Gay Pride: the decision was made to have 100 "Bi" buttons made to sell at Gay Pride. They will be \$1.00 each.

5) The Gay Pride brunch, march and banner were also discussed. Please see calendar for details.

--Laura Sachs

NEW WORDS
A WOMEN'S BOOKSTORE

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Reader's Forum



Dear BBWN,

For those folks who attended the Saturday night coffeehouse at the Portland Conference, you might have heard my tale of woe about a lost cunt (relax, it's a necklace!). Well, now there's a happy ending to the story.

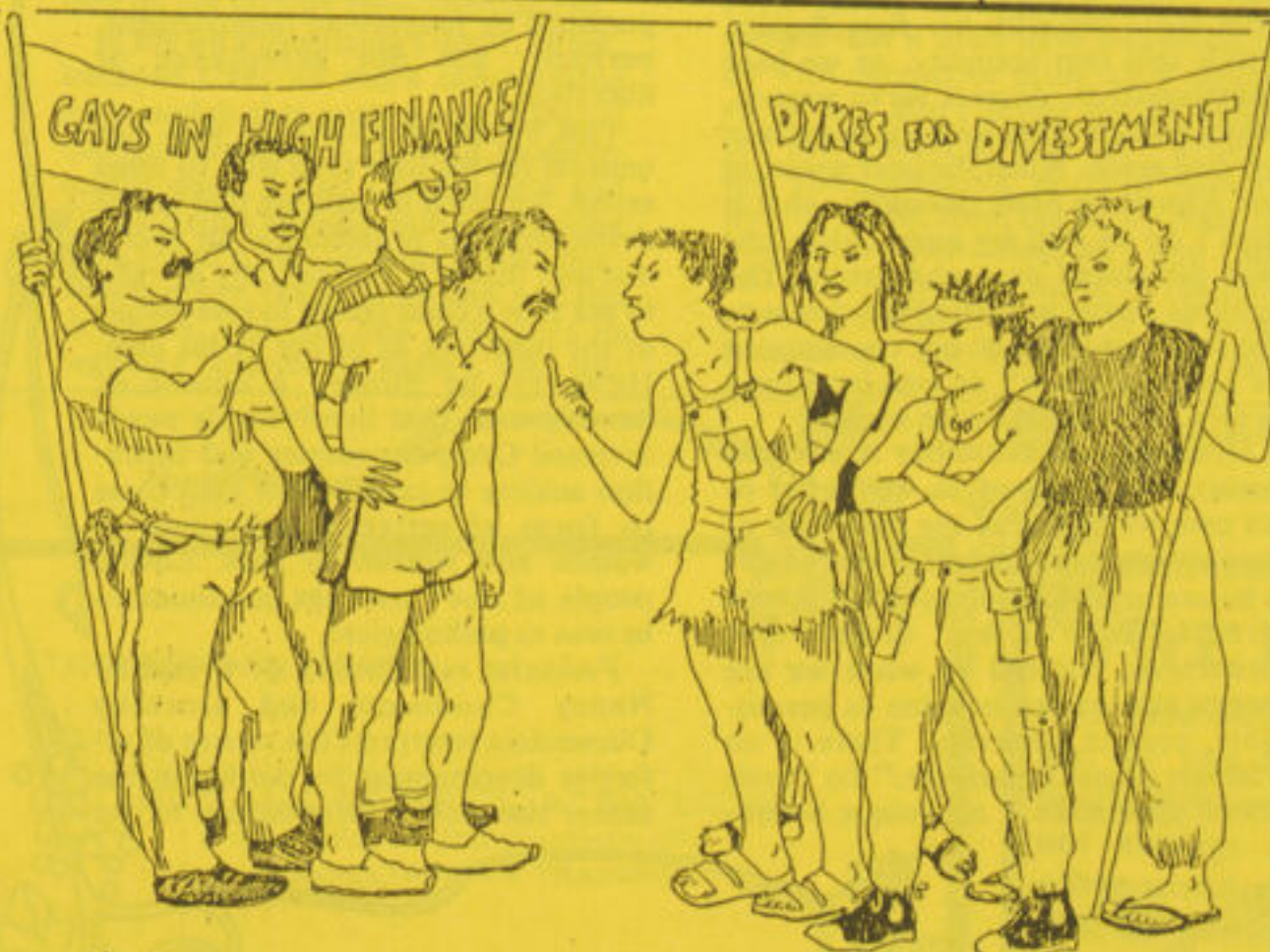
The precious object has returned home again. Two months after the conference, when I'd finally accepted my loss, I received the necklace in the mail. Much celebration!

Apparently the necklace had been found at the restaurant where several of us had dinner. Enclosed in the envelope was a slightly flirtatious note from our waitress. I guess bisexuals aren't as invisible as we used to be!

Eve Cohen

!!!INDULGE YOUR CREATIVITY!!! WORK ON THE BBWN NEWSLETTER

We know you creative BBWN'ers -- you artists, you writers, you designers, visionaries, and doodlers-- are out there. So come out, and help create the newsletter. It only requires a few hours a month and we'll teach you everything you need to know!! Interested? Call Blake at 661-3567.



A FRACAS ERUPTS IN THE PRIDE MARCH LINE-UP
WHEN EDNA MAKES AN INSINUATING REMARK ABOUT
'DAVID'S INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO.

Dear Friends,

I have just finished reading your February 1986 cover article, "Nothing to Lose but Our Illusions..." My thanks to Laura Sachs for sharing it with me.

I am constantly amazed by my own homophobia, bi-phobia, prejudice and ignorance! (I think that about covers it) Many thanks to the people and publications for the much needed "slaps in the face".

I plan to share this article with other Lesbians in hopes that they too will look within and realize that we are not being robbed of anything. We are instead being given a chance to grow, learn, love and struggle together.

I wish you good health and continued success in our collective fight against the wrongs of our worlds.

Sincerely,

Nancy M. Brindisi

(continued from page 1)

associated stereotypes that I am aware of, and it does not imply any stereotyped lifestyles. Questioning falsely and unfortunately implies thinking and not acting. Also most people assume that the objects in question are status quo structures -- basically heterosexuality. This is misguided. Ideally questioning includes all sexual orientations and the basic constructs around sexuality. Questioning challenges the constructed compartmentalization of sexuality. I believe that we should support the Bisexuality movement and go beyond that towards a Questioning movement. Questioning is the construction of an inclusive sexual continuum. I love you, Hannah.

GET PROUD !!!

"Gay Pride is Our
Pride, too"

Brunch! Buttons!

T-shirts! Friends!

Come join us on Saturday,
June 14 for a friendly
all-you-can-eat brunch.
Then march under the banner
of the BBWN. See Calendar
on page 8 for details.

ALL WOMEN WELCOME!!

June 14th

There Is No 'Natural' Human Sexuality

The circumstances that arouse our sexual feelings and the ways in which we express them are structured by the society in which we live, and have changed over time. There is no "natural" human sexuality. Historically in the West, sexuality has been linked with reproduction. This arises out of the Christian equation of sexuality with sin that must be redeemed through reproduction. It results in the invalidation of all forms of sexual expression and enjoyment other than heterosexuality. To fulfill the Christian mandate, sexuality always should be intended for reproduction. Actually, in our day, just plain heterosexuality will do, irrespective of reproductive consequences.

This sets up a major contradiction in the way we initiate children to sexuality and reproduction. We teach them that sex and sexuality are about having babies and warn them that they must not explore sex with themselves or playmates of either sex until they are old enough to be mummies and daddies. Then, when they reach adolescence and the entire culture pressures them into sexual activity (whether they want it or not), the more "enlightened" among us teach them how to be sexually (meaning heterosexually) active *without* becoming mummies or daddies. Surprise: it doesn't work very well. Teenagers do not act "responsibly"—teenage pregnancy and abortion are on the rise. Somewhere, we forget that we have been teaching lies: sexuality and reproduction are *not* linked in "advanced," "developed" societies. Youngsters are expected to be heterosexually active from their teens on, but to put off having children until they are economically independent and married, and even then to have only two or, at most, three children.

Other contradictions: this society accepts, on the whole, Freud's assumption that children are sexual from birth and that in childhood society channels that polymorphously perverse sexuality into socially acceptable forms. Yet we expect our children to be asexual. Furthermore, more than most traditional societies, we raise girls and boys together, while we insist that they must not explore their own sexuality, and especially not each other's.

What if we acknowledged the actual separation of sexuality from reproduction and encouraged our children to express themselves sexually, if they were so inclined? This would mean that they could explore their own bodies as well as those of friends of the same or the other sex, when they felt like it. It would also mean that they would probably feel at home with their

sexuality, would have some sense of their own and other people's sexual needs, and would know how to talk about these needs with friends and sexual partners *before* reproduction became an issue for them. Presumably; without the embarrassment of unexplored and unacknowledged sexual needs, contraceptive needs would be much easier to acknowledge and deal with as they arise. So, of course, would be same-sex love relationships.

As Stevi Jackson has pointed out in *Childhood and Sexuality*, this would be especially advantageous for girls, though it would help children and adolescents of both sexes. Boys, in the ordinary course of sexual exploration, discover their penis as an organ of pleasure, and it is also the organ they are taught about when they learn about reproduction. Reproduction and pleasure therefore are linked. Girls exploring themselves find their clitoris, but when they learn about reproduction, the clitoris often goes unacknowledged, and they are taught that their vagina is the organ important for sex and reproduction. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, the vagina is "the passage leading from the external genital orifice [what's an orifice, mummy?] to the uterus in mammals [what's a mammal, mummy?]; from latin *vagina*, sheath [you mean I am a sheath for a penis or a baby, mummy?]." Therefore, for boys, there is an obvious link between reproduction and their own pleasurable, erotic explorations; for most girls, there isn't.

It should not surprise us that a male-dominated society has constructed sexuality in ways that serve men's sexual needs more than women's. The interesting thing is that when Shere Hite came out with her first *Report*, which said that sexuality, as we have constructed it, doesn't serve women, many women came forward to acclaim her and agree. When she later wrote, in her *Report on Male Sexuality*—that it didn't do so well by men, either, she was dismissed as a charlatan. The analysis I have just described comes to the same conclusions: our construction of sexuality doesn't do well by women or men. But it's harder on women.

Granted that sexuality is socially constructed, each of us writes her or his own script out of the sum total of our individual experiences. None of this is inborn or biologically given. It is constructed out of our diverse life situations, limited by what we are taught and/or can imagine as permissible, correct behavior. There is no "female sexual experience," no "male sexual experience," no unique hetero-

sexual, lesbian, or gay experience. There are instead the different experiences of different people, which we lump according to socially significant categories. Whenever I hear a generalization about *the* sexual experience of some particular group, exceptions immediately come to mind—except that I refuse to call them exceptions; they are part of the total reality. Of course, some similarities are generated out of the similar social circumstances in which the members of groups find themselves, but we tend to exaggerate what exists when we go looking for in-group similarities, or for differences *between* groups.

This line of thinking is illustrated by the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy, which originated in the typologies that were in vogue in late nineteenth-century biology, especially in human biology. Behaviors were no longer merely attributes of particular persons; they *defined* people. A person who had sexual relations with a person of the same sex became a certain kind of person, a "homosexual"; a person who had sexual relations with people of the other sex, a different kind, a "heterosexual." This way of classifying people erased the hitherto accepted fact that many people don't do exclusively one or the other. It created the stereotype which was then popularized by the sex reformers, such as Havelock Ellis, who biologized the supposed difference. "The homosexual" became a person who is different by nature and therefore should not be held responsible for her or his so-called deviance. This served the purposes of the reformers (though the laws were slow to change), but it turned same-sex love into a medical problem to be treated by doctors, rather than punished by judges—an improvement, perhaps, but not acceptance or liberation.

This brings us to Freud, who was unusual for his time (and still, to some extent, for ours) in insisting that sexual development is problematic for everyone and that it is scientifically as valid to ask how a child comes to love people of the other sex as of her or his own. However, he plotted a course of development that involved his newly invented Oedipus complex and castration anxiety to explain how men come to form affective attachments to women and women to men. Loving people of one's own sex continued to be seen as pathological.

Feminist revisioning of Freud by Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein interprets the course of affective development by putting at the center the child's relationship to the

by Ruth Hubbard

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I believe most of us will end up acknowledging that we love certain people or, perhaps, certain kinds of people, and that gender need not be a significant category, though for some of us it may be.



mother rather than to the father. However, since girls' first intense, affective experience is with a person of the *same* sex, whereas for boys it is with a member of the other sex, their description continues to posit a crucial difference between the ways in which girls and boys develop their identities and erotic relationships to members of the other sex. Whereas Freud delineated a course that he believed more clear and direct for boys, but more fuzzy and problematic for girls, Chodorow's formulation suggests that male development is the more problematic. Girls grow up identifying with their primary care-giver, a woman, and assume that they will become like her. Boys, on the other hand, become men by insisting on being unlike the person who cares for them, whom they know best, who is their first love. And since boys (like girls) usually are not nearly so familiar with a man as they are with the mother (or other primary caretaker, who also usually is a woman), this necessity to differentiate themselves *in kind* from their primary caretaker engenders a fragility into the male ego that women need not deal with.

Surprisingly, neither Chodorow nor Dinnerstein addresses the question of why, in that case, women later form affective ties with men rather than transferring their primary bond from the mother (or other female caretaker) to other women. Their model readily lends itself to the idea that to women *and* men, love for women comes easily, while love for men is problematic. But they do not explore these implications.

In my own theorizing I don't, either, because I am no more comfortable with models that posit a psychological determinism than I am with biodeterminist ones. I find Chodorow's and Dinnerstein's analyses more interesting than Freud's, but no more convincing. Much more realistic to me are the diversity, change, and flexibility in sexuality reported by Kinsey, who em-

phasized that most people can love people of either sex and that choices change over time and with social circumstances. I do not give much credence to retrospective accounts by some lesbians and many gay men who believe that they were born "different," homosexual. In my teaching, I have sometimes asked students to reflect—out loud, if they wish—about the development of their own early loves and attachments. And, usually, women who think of themselves as heterosexual in that their sexual relationships, as adults, are with men recall strong erotic ties to one or more women or girls during their childhood and adolescence. My point is that if these women were involved in loving relationships with women, they might look to these early loves as "proof" that they had always been lesbians, while if they relate sexually to men, they may be tempted to devalue them and call them childhood crushes.

I believe that people fall in love with individuals, not with a sex. Even within one sex, most of us prefer certain "types"; usually not any man or woman will do. It is an interesting question what shapes those preferences. But no one has suggested that something innate makes us light up in the presence of certain men or women. We would think it absurd to look to hormone levels or any other biological phenomenon as the cause for "type" preference within a sex. In fact, scientists rarely bother to ask what in our psychosocial experiences shapes such tastes and preferences. We assume that it must have something to do with parents or other early experiences, but don't probe deeply unless our preferences involve the "wrong" sex. Then, suddenly, we try to pinpoint specific causes from out of the maze of biological, psychological, and social experiences that make us the people we are at a given time in our lives. Because of our recent history and

political experiences, feminists have an easier time accepting this line of reasoning than many other people do. Many women who have thought of ourselves as "heterosexual," and who may have married and had children, when we have had the opportunity to rethink, refeel, and restructure our lives have fallen in love with women, sometimes much to our own surprise.

The society in which we live channels, guides, and limits our imagination in sexual as well as in other matters. Why some of us give ourselves permission to love people of our sex whereas others don't is an interesting question, but I don't think it will be answered by checking our hormone levels or trying to unearth our earliest affectional ties. As more women begin to speak more freely about our sexual experiences, we are learning more about how women come to re-examine, re-evaluate, change. Lately, increasing numbers of women have begun to allow ourselves to acknowledge "bisexuality"—loving women *and* men, in succession or simultaneously. I believe that most of us will end up acknowledging that we love certain people or, perhaps, certain kinds of people, and that gender need not be a significant category, though for some of us it may be.

Ruth Hubbard is a professor of biology at Harvard University, where she teaches courses dealing with the interactions of science and society, particularly as they affect women. She has written numerous articles and co-edited several books, the most recent of which are Biological Woman—The Convenient Myth, with Mary Sue Henifin and Barbara Fried, and Woman's Nature: Rationalizations of Inequality, with Marian Lowe. She is a member of Science for the People and of the National Women's Health Network, and has written a chapter on new reproductive technologies for The New Our Bodies, Ourselves.

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(Continued from page 1)

storage areas, file drawers and bureaus, and tables festooned with drip pans and chemicals for developing photographs. Except for walls covered with photos, the apartment is completely spartan.

I can see myself in fairly good detail, my face as I remember it in mirrors and photographs. I am first dressed in my purple pants and velour shirt, then remember it is summer and re-dress myself in my blue striped shortsleeved blouse and brown pants. Renee will be a problem; on Earth she tends to dress in corduroys and turtlenecks. Quite unnatural in the summertime.

I am walking down Eighth Street, past the Barnes & Noble, past where Book Branch East used to be. Somewhere in this tangle of roads is Spring Street; ah, I must turn South on Broadway, heading toward Prince. I reach Prince Street, and turn onto Spring Street, the next block. I find my imaginary building and make my way in. The door opens for me; I am her Creatrix, after all, I can do as I wish here in this universe. It is parallel to my own yet one in which I am in more control.

I observe the apartment from close up, pass from photograph to photograph, taken so long ago that the memory of individual photos fuzz in my mind. My face is scant inches from the display; still, I am looking at fuzzes. My failing memory betrays the believability of this fantasy. Nevertheless, I train my mind on Renee wending her way home. I lean against the window, facing the small hallway by the door, and fold my arms.

I hear her key in the door, hear the door open. Renee steps in, turns to enter the living room and stops. She grins at me and I grin back, and I get a good look at her face, something that has also had trouble coming into focus at times. She and I share similar features, but we are not twins to each other. Her face is idealized, pear shaped where mine is more square. Her face is unblemished, her cheekbones are high and soft. We share similar eyes and eyebrows, however, and our noses are much the same shape. Our lips are almost identical. Her face is not freckled as mine is, and is lighter; her hair falls the same over her forehead as mine does. The planes of her face are more pronounced; she almost looks like a bas relief. Her hair is loose, which is out of character for the summer, but then again so are her corduroys and turtleneck.

She flashes out and reappears, this time with her hair up and in a shortsleeved blue shirt and navy pants and sandals. Our faces resemble each other's much more closely, now that we both wear our hair up: mine in a twisted French knot, hers in a single braid looped around itself and tightened into a bun. She is as curious as I am, and overjoyed to see me. She says, "So. You finally made it."

I nod, equally pleased.

We go over our relative status here. My presence in Renee's universe at first appears to be a contradiction in terms; I am the outside universe, the embodiment of hers entire. I control her ultimately, although there are scenes that occur that are beyond my control; I surprise myself. Yet my self in her universe is not real, but directly tied to the me that lies on my mattress, watching myself and Renee, inputting directly the things I want to say to her.

She knows the situation. "This you isn't real, is it?" she asks.

"No," I say. I reflect back on myself, just for a moment, lying naked on my mattress and headphoned into music, with my eyes closed. Renee sees what I see, feels what I feel, and for a split second she fades out and becomes me. I return to the fantasy: her leaning against one wall, me leaning against the window. I walk over to her mattress and sit down. "One of these days you'll have to see my house in Boston," I tell her. "I'll get you out of New York for a while."

... I recline on the mattress. I take a good look at her and smile. She is exquisitely beautiful, my ideal self, just the person I could take in my arms, make love to, keep company with. She and I are old friends; we've grown together, gone through various pains together, real or unreal but equally strong. There is now a tacit understanding between us; I am the Creatrix, she the Creation, yet there are things that do not happen with my conscious control. Right now I am thrilled to be where I am, doing something I have not dared to do before, where I watch myself as well as Renee, wondering what I will do next.

It does not take much courage on my part to strip; nor does Renee hesitate. I gaze at her body as I do at my own in the mirror. It is all quite natural; now that I enjoy looking at myself nude in the mirror, dancing, watching my body move

(Continued on page 7)



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gracefully, so now I can study Renee's nude body in more detail. Our breasts are perhaps the most similarly shaped; of course she does not sag as much as I do. She is, after all, my ideal self. She is thinner than I, but our proportions are the same. More and more, as I accept myself, she grows to resemble me all the more.

I initiate the first contact, the first kiss. I am confident, aggressive; it is good to see myself this way, not waiting for her to move (for she is also aggressive; I have learned from her). We plant kisses on each other's lips, cheeks, neck, in between snatches of conversation: she asks me when I plan to get to Somewhere Else, finally; she would go there at the drop of a hat because our curiosity about going to a women's bar has been mounting. I hunger for that contact with other women, yet carry all the stigmas with me. To Renee, of course, this is quite trite; there's no reason why I shouldn't just waltz in. She gives me encouragement.

Kissing her full on the lips is electrifying; it fulfills a deep need of mine. I have wanted this contact with her for years, yet had always held back. Exploring her body, having her explore mine, is not as easy but much easier than I anticipated. We make love with a sense of wonder. Renee promises me that when we take the bus to Boston (she hasn't yet been on a Greyhound) she will take me to Somewhere Else; we will go together; when I go in the real world I will probably feel her reassuring presence in the back of my mind.

We relax, dress, walk together down the streets of Manhattan. Repeatedly we flash knowing smiles at each other; we are walking equally in her universe, side by side, for the first time in thirteen years...

Journal excerpt, five days after the fantasy: I felt no time pressure to get home: the straight, safe home to work to home routine. The night was mine to roam in. I had dinner in a small diner and later missed my train to Winchester. And thought, "Now. Somewhere Else. It will be so easy." All the nagging fears, uneasiness, and eagerness, all my mixed emotions about finally going to a women's bar, relaxing with my own gender and having a drink or two — they were nowhere to be found. Didn't have to imagine Renee holding my hand or popping up in my imagination, behind my shoulder; she and I were one and the same.

BI-CONNECTIONS

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Martina loses at U.S. Open: Can't lose citizenship

Q In her life story, Martina Navratilova frankly confesses her sexual orientation to women. She writes that she came to "realize my attractions—social, emotional, professional, intellectual, sexual—were toward women." Since Martina was born in Czechoslovakia, can't she be deported from this country on grounds of unnatural sexual affinity or moral turpitude?—Phil R., Brownsville, Tex.

A Martina Navratilova is an American citizen. On her application for citizenship, she admitted to bisexuality. She did not perjure herself. Citizenship was granted in 1981. It cannot be revoked now on grounds of her sexual preference.



Stephanie: Sure looks like a girl to us

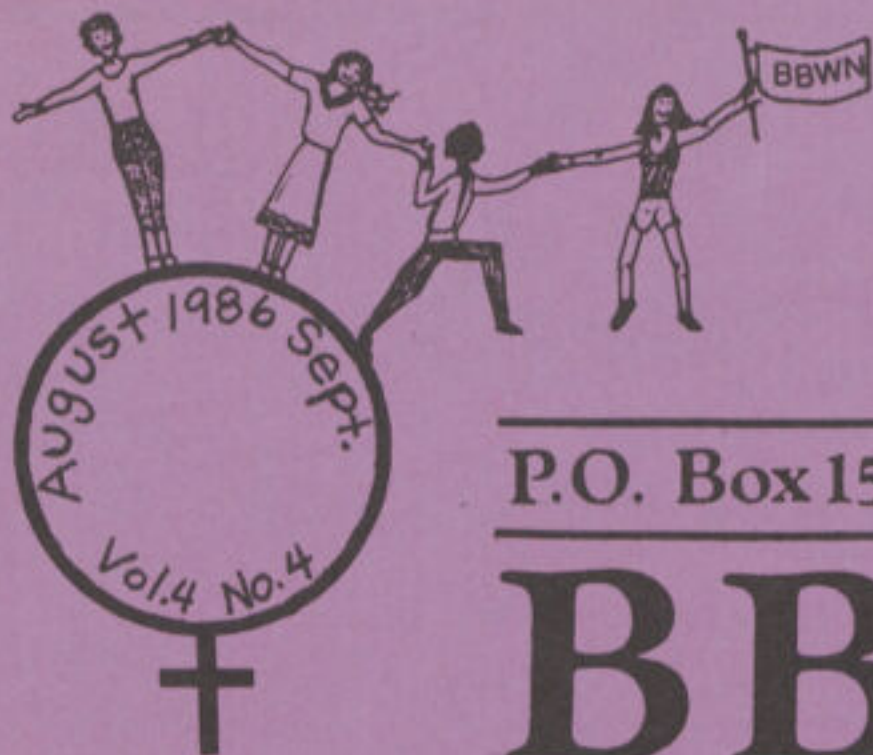
Q I know this is a funny question, but maybe you can answer it anyway. It's about Princess Stephanie, the daughter of Prince Rainier of Monaco and the late Grace Kelly. Is Stephanie male or female? From the neck up, she looks like a boy; from the neck down, she looks like a girl. What is she?—Philippa Davidson, St. Louis, Mo.

A Princess Stephanie, 20, is a female, but she is somewhat androgynous-looking with her hair cut short.

Q Who was the wit who said that one of the advantages of bisexuality was that it doubled one's chances of getting a date on Saturday night? Was it Oscar Wilde?—G.B., Portland, Ore.

A The remark has been credited to the novelist Gore Vidal.





P.O. Box 1534, JP, MA 02130

BBWN



From Where I Stand: A Case for Feminist Bisexuality

Deborah Gregory

This is a revised version of an article originally written as part of a project on radical implications of women's sexuality. At first the task at hand seemed relatively simple. We talked about our own diverse sexualities, saw what they had in common, where they differed. We tried to distil some essence of female sexuality as it had been constructed and experienced by at least this one group of women of various ages, nationalities, classes, political perspectives, sexual herstories, and so on. We hoped to be able to put forward a notion of a woman-centred sexuality which would unite lesbian, heterosexual and bisexual women, and which would include celibate women, since we all recognised immediately that sexuality is as much about our thoughts and feelings as our overt sexual behaviour.

After several weeks of most interesting discussion, we selected specific topics. I decided to write something about bisexuality and non-monogamy. At least I knew something about my own bisexuality, and about my own experience of rebuilding a relationship from a monogamous, heterosexual marriage into a non-monogamous, bisexual (on my part), living-together-separately.

As I didn't want my contribution to reflect only my own experience, and had no idea how common my experience was amongst other feminists, I constructed a questionnaire which I circulated at the Third London Regional Women's Liberation Conference in 1980. I also introduced a workshop at that conference for bisexual women. I subsequently participated in a workshop on bisexuality at the Haringey Women's Centre. I have discussed the issues extensively (endlessly, compulsively) with nearly every woman I know at all well. In addition to receiving completed questionnaires, I have had letters from a number of women on the subject of their own bisexuality.

Now I find myself in the position of having learned so much I no longer know anything. When women talk about their sexuality, they talk about various social, emotional, physical and spiritual needs, desires and forces which contribute to their identity as a female person. When women describe their sexuality, how it feels, how they feel, how they live out their sexuality, it seems to me they say roughly similar things, regardless of the gender of people they would potentially choose for sexual partners.

They also say very different things. These similarities and differences simply refuse to line themselves up neatly with such categories as lesbian-bisexual-heterosexual. They refuse to align themselves with differences of class, race, or any other instantly recognisable

pigeonhole. When you talk about specific sexual practices – such as vaginal penetration, oral stimulation, masturbation, soft all-over caressing of the body, whatever – if you eliminate gender-specific pronouns and references, most of the time you cannot tell whether the speaker identifies as lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual. When women describe their sexual fantasies, fears, desires or joys, those categories simply do not explain the content of the descriptions. They do not designate different kinds of women.

I think of a heterosexual woman as one whose sexuality can be most safely and deeply and fully expressed with a man and not with a woman. I think of a lesbian woman as one whose sexuality can be most safely and deeply and fully expressed with a woman, and not with a man. I think of a bisexual woman as one whose sexuality can be safely and deeply expressed with either a man or a woman, but fully expressed with neither. The sexuality which is expressed – how women behave with their sexual partners, what they think of and how they feel about their sexual behaviour – cannot be defined nor encapsulated by the terms 'lesbian', 'heterosexual' or 'bisexual'. Individual differences within each category far outweighs differences between groups.

We have to go beyond individual experience, if we are to understand that experience. So I start with the one thing I know for certain: the invisibility, hostility, and self-doubt experienced by *all* women who attempt to control their sexual destinies.

Assumptions

Bisexuality seems to be in disfavour everywhere except in Lonely Hearts columns. The dominant culture views it by the same heterosexual norms which condemn lesbianism as a perversion, and woman-centred heterosexuality as non-existent or grotesque. The women's liberation movement views it as either non-existent (where do I fit into the current 'lesbian-heterosexual split?'); destructive (dabbling in women from the security of heterosexuality); or as frivolous. It seems acceptable only to the sexual liberationists, who see sexual activity solely as an expression of pleasure, sociability, and personal growth, divorced from any boring political analyses, within a general framework of 'more is better'.

There are many more feminists than ever I supposed who identify privately as bisexual. Few of them seem pleased about it. Many feel they are bisexual by default, as they seem to be neither lesbian nor heterosexual. Many fear their feelings for particular male lovers are a contradiction of their emotional and political commitment to women. Some previously heterosexual bisexual feminists would rather be lesbians and see lesbianism as a more desirable sexuality but one from which they are currently excluded by remnants of attachments to particular men, to the dreams and fantasies which haunt them, or by remnants of fears connected with embracing a lesbian existence.

Continued on page 4

The newsletter of The Boston Bisexual Women's Network



Newsletter Staff: Blake Walton,
Editor, Layout: Laura Sachs,
Co-Editor, Typing; Mary-
Charlotte Domandi, mail box!

Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes

6/29/86

Present: Cathy Cummings, Beth Imhoff, Laura Sachs,
Sharon Gonsalves.

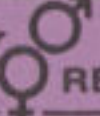
- 1) Written agreements/services done for the BBWN; there have been a few misunderstandings when people have done work for the Network. To avoid this in the future, service contracts with date, amount, exact commitments, etc., will be drawn up by Laura and Beth.
- 2) Fall Fundraising Insert: A new insert for BBWN membership will be included with this newsletter. Please send your dues in as soon as possible.
- 3) There was continued discussion about a telephone/answering machine system for BBWN, BBMN, and the Northeast Regional Committee. Final decisions regarding payment and location are still to be resolved.
- 4) Post-Pride follow-up: The following points about Pride were discussed: a) The committee for Pride has to get organized sooner - start in March for the June event. This will allow enough time to get things done (brunch, t-shirts, buttons, literature, banner, etc.) with a grace period in case of any snafus, b) We should not be doing any activity unless at least two people are willing to make the commitment. Having dual person responsibility for activities we undertake will (hopefully) allow us to avoid incomplete projects in case something happens to either of the persons involved, c) We need to have fundraising activities focused around Pride.
- 5) A general discussion was held on the following issues: a) Investigating what's involved in getting a "Non-profit" status and to what this would entitle us. b) Having follow-up from the bi-monthly introductory meetings; increasing the involvement of new people in BBWN organization and activities. c) Increasing the involvement in BBWN organization and activities from existing membership.
- 6) A process regarding money spending/approval of budget items needs to be established. Just calling our treasurer, Sharon Gonsalves, and asking for funds is insufficient. This will be continued at the next CC meeting.
- 7) There is continued interest in having a "Bulletin Board" in upcoming newsletters. There have been a few general discussions regarding guidelines, but complete parameters need to be finalized. For the "Bulletin Board" to be a thriving part of our newsletter, BBWN needs a least two (or more) persons willing to take responsibility to make it work. If you are interested, please come to CC meetings (see calendar) where it will be discussed.

--Laura Sachs

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Balance as of 5/20	\$473.58
<u>Expenses</u>	
Envelopes	49.20
Printing for June/July Newsletter	149.73
Pride Day Brunch Food/Supplies	100.00
Rental of Community Church Meeting Room	25.00
Banner Materials	30.00
Total	\$353.93
<u>Income</u>	
Membership Dues	152.00
Pride Day Brunch Receipts	232.00
Checking Account Interest	2.24
Total	\$386.24
Balance as of 7/15	\$505.89

How common is bisexuality?

THE
Kinsey  **REPORT**

By Dr. June M. Reinisch

DEAR DR. REINISCH — Isn't it true that most people are bisexual — that there is some element of attraction to or love for members of one's own sex in everyone?

If you include attraction and love in your definition of bisexuality, then, yes: Many people could be labeled "bisexual" under those rules.

If you count as bisexual only those people whose actual sexual activity is with partners of both sexes over a period of some years, then only 10 percent to 15 percent of the U.S. population can be labeled "bisexual."

However, some of those individuals would reject the bisexual label because they do not identify themselves in that way. Many prisoners, for example, have sexual activity with partners of the same sex while they are incarcerated, but still think of themselves as

being heterosexual, not homosexual or bisexual. Both before and after being in prison, they have no involvement with partners of the same sex.

The Kinsey Institute recently hosted a meeting of 40 scientists at which the most current research on questions of sexual orientation were presented and discussed. Among reports at that meeting were data about individuals whose partner preference changed during their lifetime — something that many researchers had previously said did not happen.

For example, we were told about a 65-year-old man who was happily married for 45 years but who, within a year of the death of his wife, fell in love with another man. Another report involved a woman who first fell in love with a man, whom she married; 10 years later, fell in love with a woman and divorced her husband; but now, in her 40s, finds herself again sexually attracted to men.


Obviously, questions of sexual attraction are much more complicated, at least for some people, than was previously imagined.

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Reader's Forum

Dear Womyn of BBWN,

Since you're our heroes, predecessors and mentors I'm hoping that someone among you will have the time to answer my plea for ideas.

As the "Corresponding Secretary", ex-co-chair, and one of the few of the early members of our network still active, I've been trying to re-think some of the ways that we are currently handling some of the tasks within the network. In doing so, it seemed wise to ask you all how you've dealt with these things in the past, and now.

For instance, phone calls: for the past year or more we've been using my home phone for all calls to the network. For about six months prior to that we had an answering service, but when a money crunch came decided we could and should eliminate that. How does your network handle phone calls? Do you have an answering service? Do you return all calls (women and men alike)? Do you get "crank" calls? How do you handle calls from women who request (sometimes with urgency) that instead of coming to a group event, someone from the group meets on a one-to-one basis with them? Have you ever done that? Does one or do many women return calls? Do you get a lot of calls?

We've recently begun "introductory meetings" (not an original idea - we thought your idea was terrific). Tomorrow will be our first such meeting on a bi-monthly basis. What is the format of your introductory meetings? How long do they usually last? Are they very well attended? Who speaks and on what?

One of the things I, personally, like the most about your newsletter is that it is so content-filled with articles related to bisexuality. I would like ours to have more of that. Who does the research for these articles (one or a few women)? Where do they go for information (i.e. where do they have access to the Bi-Monthly for example)? How do you feel about us reprinting articles from your newsletter?

How many women are really active in your network?

Well, that's plenty of questions for the time being. As I said, I hope one of you can spare the time to reply (and I know how hard it is to make the time for all the demands of the network).

Thanks in advance.

In sisterhood,
Pat H.

ABW
Action Bi-Women
606 W. Barry
#117
Chicago, IL 60657

Dear BBWN,

Thanks so much for doing the outreach work you've been doing! Keep up the inspiring workshops. I met some of you in Portland, Maine, and you sent me the April/May Newsletter. We here in Maine have started a small group - getting together for potluck dinners (you may have heard about us through Ginny L.). Anyway - besides sending some money and saying hello; myself and possibly some other bi's from my group are coming to Boston for the March and would love to volunteer and/or meet some other folks from the network.

Love, Robin C.

Dear Friends:

With this letter, I'd like to give you some information about the Dutch Bi-club. In 1983, the Landelijke Steunen Aktiegroep Bisexualiteit (the national support and action group on bisexuality) was set up. The group organized a national manifestation, which was attended by about 300 people. It also joined the demonstrations of homosexuals in 1983 and 1984. In ten cities there were raised regional groups. All these activities are by and for both males and females.

For several reasons, in 1985 some people stopped their activities, our magazine didn't appear anymore, and only a few regional groups were left. In December of 1985 some people from the regional groups which were still in action have tried to make a new start and it appears that it's going to succeed. Representatives of the regional groups come together every 3 months to discuss national activities. We don't have an office or a library--only a P.O. Box (a new one in Amsterdam! P.O. Box 5087, 1007 AB Amsterdam). The real activities are in the regions: conversation groups, information evenings, a festive evening. The national activities now are the magazine Bi-nieuws (Bi-news) and we are preparing for the national gay pride day in Utrecht on June 28.

As the Bi-club is not a small solid club anymore, but consists of the representatives of regional groups, we changed our official name into Landelijk Netwerk Bisexualiteit (National Bi-Network).

With this letter I send you the second edition of Bi-nieuws. All the addresses of our groups are in it. I hope you can find someone who speaks Dutch! Perhaps we could keep in touch in the future.

With best greetings,
Herman Vinckers

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Some women who formerly identified as exclusively lesbian now have male lovers, and find their lesbian identity challenged by this experience. However, most women who identify as bisexual are not failed lesbians. Many feminists view their bisexuality not as a transition period to either lesbianism or heterosexuality, but see themselves as having *made* the transition to a positive acceptance of their bisexuality.

This is an area in which confusion abounds (I think every woman who answered my questionnaire used the word 'confused' at least twice), so before going any further I would like to make explicit a few of the assumptions which underlie my thinking. There are four.

First, I am assuming that all women suffer from heterosexism. Whatever our sexual orientation, male sexuality is the standard by which we are defined, judged, treated and mistreated. Women of different sexualities (like women of different classes or races) are in different positions with respect to the dominant culture, so we are oppressed differently by men and by patriarchal institutions; but we are certainly all oppressed. *Conventional heterosexuality is not a place of safety for women.*

Secondly, I am assuming that no sexuality is 'natural'. Heterosexuality, bisexuality and lesbianism all tend to be presented as *the* natural sexuality by their supporters. I think this is impossible to demonstrate, given that sexuality is socially constructed. We have learned our sense of ourselves, generally as well as sexually, within a context of enforced heterosexuality and male supremacy, which makes any

BODYWORKS



MARGARITA ASCENCIO
576-1493

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talk of natural sexuality particularly misleading. Furthermore, appeals to nature generally function as subtle normative statements and should never be trusted.

Thirdly, I am assuming that no sexual activity or practice is political in itself. What is potentially political and radical is the sort of relationships which make these practices both possible and necessary. It is less a question of what is done in bed and with whom, and more a question of the connections between what is done in bed and what is done everywhere else. Large-scale changes in relationships between people can only be realised in a context of changes in the structures and institutions which make relationships of any sort possible.

Fourthly, I am assuming that there is not an irreconcilable contradiction between opposing men as a class and accepting the possibility of close emotional/sexual relationships with some particular man. I assume that feminists hate male political power, social maleness, rather than biological maleness in itself. Many women who are bisexual don't sleep with any men at all nor do they contemplate doing so, but they recognise within themselves – and do not want to reject – the emotional openness to the possibility that they could feel sufficient rapport with some man to want a sexual relationship with him. I assume there is a big difference between 'unlikely' and 'impossible'.

Identification

Most women I have talked with make a clear distinction between their sexual activity and their sexuality. For most bisexual women, ticking off the sex of their current and recent sexual partners would not convey the substance of what they mean when they say, 'I am bisexual'. Many lesbian women have had sexual relations with men, and this does not make them identify as bisexual. Many bisexual women have or have had sexual relations with only or mainly women, only or mainly men, or they rarely have sexual relations with anyone. So what meaning, and what importance, does a bisexual identification have for us?

Bisexuality has to do with how we think and feel about ourselves in relation to other women and to men. In order to flesh out what this means, I need to talk about a 'lesbian component' and a 'heterosexual component', and then I hope to be able to talk about the bisexual whole which is constructed from these fragments. (I am using 'lesbian' and 'heterosexual' loosely to mean 'in relation to other women' and 'in relation to men'. Talking about components sounds disgustingly like hi-fi adverts, I know; alternatives gratefully accepted.)

Bisexual women share with lesbians the joy of identifying with the femaleness of our woman lovers and, by extension, with women generally. There is both pleasure and relief in the feeling, 'I know you. I sense what you want, I sense what you feel, because you are like me, I feel those things, too.' Acceptance and love of your own



BETH WALSH

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body is connected to acceptance and love of other women's bodies. Love-making with another woman is, according to many bisexual women, simpler than with men, more harmonious, more sensuous, more relaxed. There are longer periods of arousal when sensuality and sexuality flow into each other; there are generally fewer anxieties about the acceptability of one's body, performance, sexual-emotional needs, or about whether your lover will give you an orgasm. There is a feeling of continuity with other areas of our lives, the sense that we are still within the world of feminism when we are in bed with another woman.

Of course, not all women have such ideal sexual relationships with other women. Relationships with other women can be disastrous, both emotionally and sexually, in spite of sharing lesbian separatist, radical feminist or other politics. To idealise lesbian-feminist relationships is to make them invisible and unliveable. What in the final analysis makes a woman identify as lesbian, or identify with her lesbian component, must surely be a sexual-emotional-spiritual desire for contact with specific other women, not merely a sense of shared oppression. Generally, the experience of loving other women sexually has made bisexual women feel more attached to women emotionally, more attuned to women, more secure in their identification with other women. Most women who answered my questionnaire related their lesbianism to their feelings of solidarity with all women.

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However much bisexual women feel gladdened and nourished by their sexual attachment to women and their sexual identification with women in general, they do not feel complete in that lesbian identification. Our sexuality – the emotional field surrounding our sexual identification – encompasses a heterosexual component. This may be directed toward a particular man (perhaps a long-standing partner). We have a certain relationship which makes sense in our life, and which we value. We see ourselves as attracted to a particular person, and the fact that he is male is not sufficient to make us discontinue the relationship. This is something which we share with many heterosexual feminists.

Many bisexual women who do not have a long-standing relationship with a man still have sexual relationships with men. Some of these women have previously spent many years in exclusively lesbian relationships and are as surprised as anyone else to discover themselves in relationships with men. Unfavourable responses range from simple incomprehension to enraged accusations of betrayal. Why do women who do not identify as heterosexual choose to have sexual relations with men?

First of all, many women say they do not particularly look for a man. Most of us feel closed and hostile to most men most of the time. It is not maleness itself which attracts us, nor do we seek something from men that we find lacking in women. Often we look for the same emotional and sexual qualities, the same spiritual and physical qualities, in men as in women. And the truth of our experience is that sometimes we do find those qualities in a man. We do not ignore the fact that the bearer of these qualities is a man: not our own awareness, nor the ways even the most androgynous man behaves, nor the ways in which the world is structured would ever let us do that, *nor do we want to*. Simply, we would rather confront the difficulties than avoid them. We do not experience all dealings with men as servicing them and draining ourselves at our sisters' expense. We would experience more draining of psychic energy by cutting off from our own possibilities than we do from accepting them and working from there.

A number of women say they find it easier to assert themselves with male lovers, without feeling guilty about being too dominating. We tend to have high, perhaps unrealistic, standards of feminist equality in our relationships with women, and often find it hard to come to terms with ways we need to assert ourselves in sexual relationships. We have developed a firm political basis from which to do battle with men; we feel entitled to assert our own reality, our own interests over theirs. Between women, the dimensions of power and control are often more ambiguous; this is sometimes overwhelmingly threatening. Many women have had to fight so hard to be a person that the thought of surrendering any crumb of our hard-won autonomy to someone else is devastating. It is often easier to hang on to our identity and autonomy with a man, who is clearly different from us, and whom we know we can fight, than with a woman who is so similar, so close.

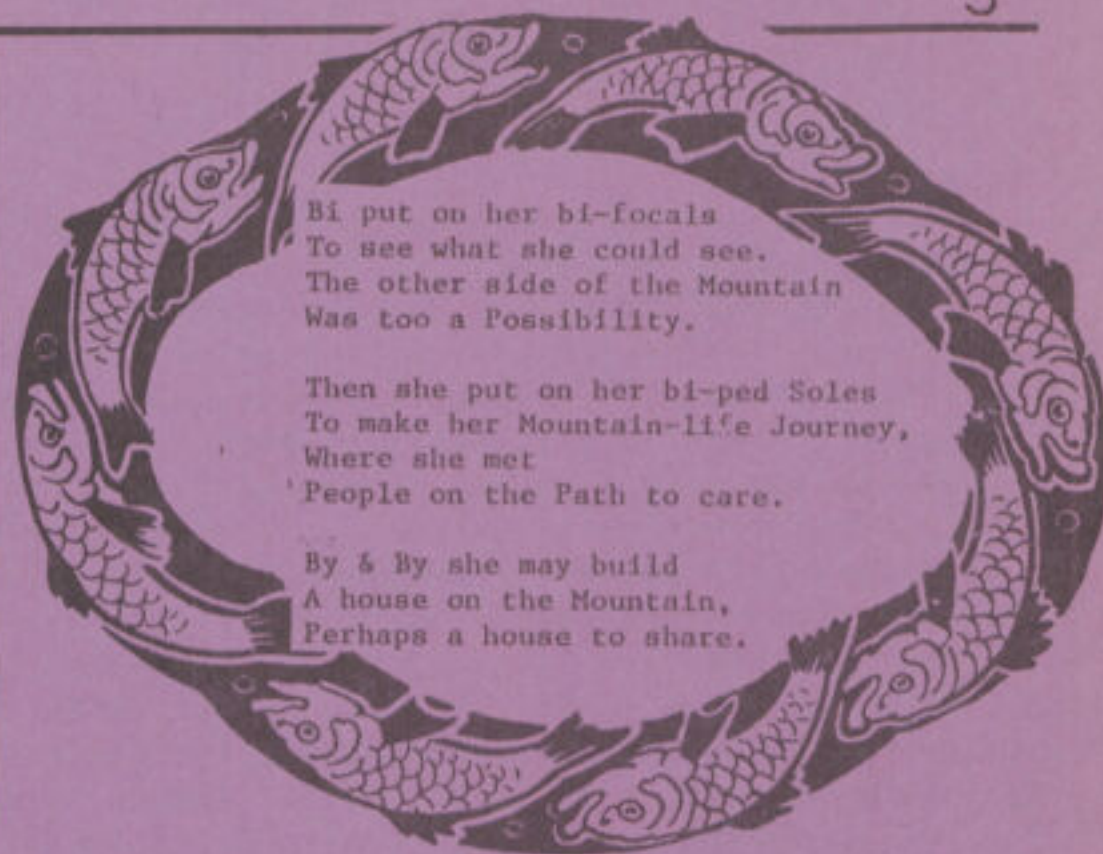
Making love

What is it like to make love with a man when one also makes love with women? What is similar, what is different? The answers are various.

Some women generally prefer sex with women but do like to sleep with the man or men they are close to. Many women replying to the questionnaire said they prefer casual sex with men – that is, relationships which are more friendly than romantic, and fairly circumscribed in time and place – rather than deep involvements. Many said it feels wrong to have sex with women outside the context of a deep, loving, committed relationship. Others say they find sex with women more comforting and sensuous, sex with men more erotic.

Many women, perhaps the majority, feel they are still in the first stages of exploring their sexuality, with both women and men. As one woman wrote, 'I hate the idea that everyone is either gay or straight. I

Continued on next page



Q How valid is the rumor that the British royal family has been tolerant of homosexuals and bisexuals because some of its own members were homosexuals? Didn't that gay playwright, Noël Coward, engage in sexual high jinks with one of the male royals, or was it with more than one?—D.P.D., Washington, D.C.



Sir Noël Coward

A The late playwright-actor Sir Noël Coward, a self-admitted homosexual, reportedly "engaged in sexual high jinks," to use your expression, with the Duke of Kent, who was killed in an air crash in 1942. Kent—the younger brother of the Prince of Wales, who later became King Edward VIII—was a well-known bisexual whose taste for black women and effeminate white men has been cited in the published diaries of the 1920s and '30s. The British royal family has attracted to its company men of talent, wit and sophistication, among them such bisexuals as Cecil Beaton, Harold Nicolson, Terence Rattigan, Benjamin Britten and others. "Remembered Laughter: The Life of Noël Coward," by Cole Lesley, "The Noël Coward Diaries," the diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart and "Royal Feud," by Michael Thornton, are among the published works dealing in part with the sexual orientation of the British establishment.

Outrageous Women

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don't want to have to make a choice. I don't want to *define* my sexuality, I want to *explore* it.'

Most women found it hard to put into words specifically what it is they do with lovers – men or women – and responded to questions with general statements. Some said they do entirely different things in bed with women and with men, and connected this with being sexually 'aggressive' or 'passive'. Some worried about being 'too aggressive/domineering' with other women, 'too submissive/passive' with men, or just the reverse. Others say they do pretty much the same things with men or women, kissing, stroking, licking, sucking, reaching orgasms from clitoral stimulation provided by fingers, mouths, genitals, accompanied or not by vaginal penetration.

Many women find penetration by a penis oppressive and humiliating, and refuse to do it. Most said that they find it irrelevant or obstructive to their orgasms. Other women do like it, but less for their sexual satisfaction than for a feeling of closeness and oneness with their partner. Some women like penetration with male partners, but with women never think to miss a penis. Some mentioned a dislike of semen or a dislike of available contraception as reasons for preferring sex with women.

I have found it difficult – initially, nearly impossible – to make love with a man the way I wanted to, as I knew it was important to me that the man would be as vulnerable to me as I was to him. He had to be able to receive my caresses, to let me make love to him as I would to another woman. I would only feel close to a man who could accept that sex was about me expressing my sexuality as much as about him expressing his, and that my sexuality did not consist in my responsiveness to him. Had I not found any man equal to that challenge, I would today identify as a lesbian.

I think a lot of the erotic interest of male lovers has to do with the challenge they pose in terms of their total difference from us, the gap between their perceptions and ours. (This may also be true at times with other women.) We find the sorts of confrontations we have with men stimulating and energising. Much of what goes into a bisexual woman's heterosexual component is a need to express aggression, to challenge, to overcome the limits imposed by the partner's reality, a need to express the passion of ferocity. There is no logical reason we couldn't do those things with a woman. I cannot offer an explanation for why we tend not to look to women for combat. My guess is that it has something to do with our earlier experience of achieving individuality in struggle against male dominance and our later experience of achieving individuality through positive bonding with other women. I want to correct the impression I may have given above that lovemaking between women is all gentle, easy-flowing sensuality; while lovemaking with men is all about the taming of Tarzan by Jane. Lovemaking between women, however, is full of challenge and the interplay of distinct, sometimes conflicting egos. It

is not all sweetness and light, because women do not generally want all sweetness and light. Nor do all men want to bang away at a warm, wet hole. Within the women's liberation movement we tend to emphasise the brutishness of typical phallocentric sexuality and the sensitivity of lesbian sexuality because those aspects of reality are seldom discussed anywhere else.

Nearly all the women in the discussions and in their responses to the questionnaire said that sexual experience with other women made them feel better about themselves as women, as sexually potent people. Many women experienced orgasm with a sexual partner for the first time with another woman. They also experienced a loving, more thoroughly honest connection with a sexual partner for the first time. They felt more confirmed in their positive feelings for women. Even women whose sexual relationships with specific women were disappointing and unsatisfying feel attached and committed to the lesbian component of their sexual identity. Women whose background was previously lesbian also say that their decision to confront men sexually in their personal lives, or their decision to validate their sexual feelings for a particular man, has not changed their basic perception of themselves as woman-identified women.

Rather than feeling tied to a male-defined identification because they accept their heterosexual component, bisexual women say they feel more than ever woman-identified. We know we are not operating from a position of fearful rigidity, or from the sort of dependence which had formerly pushed some of us into intransigent separatist positions which felt politically correct but emotionally all wrong. (I am not claiming this is a characteristic of separatist positions, only that some women say this was characteristic of their own separatism.) Women say they became 'less prepared to put up with men's lack of sensual sensitivity, less interested in tolerating the game-playing, need for mothering, power-tripping', and found they did not have to shut out part of themselves in order to do that. They refused to service men sexually.

We do not have to assume that a penis is an infallible sign of stunted humanity. We can remain attuned to the possibilities, even when we declare war on the current realities. The whole point of why bisexual feminists embrace our heterosexual component is that we see it as more about *us* than about men. We would feel diminished and crippled without that part of ourselves.

Ultimately, it is for each woman to discover which aspects of herself she wishes to express sexually, and what forms she wishes to give to that expression. It would be a pity if we thought that the meanings of sexual expression are entirely the property of the dominant culture. That would force us to abandon the search for control over our sexual practice. We are not only the objects and receptacles of cultural meanings, we are also their originators and creators. This is part of what consciousness-raising is all about.

From what we have learned within our world of women we conduct our heterosexual activities from a position of strength based on ultimate indifference to men. This is not taking energy from women to give to men. We are taking something for ourselves, something which we can share with other women. Bisexuality is obviously not the only position of strength from which to operate with men, but it certainly is a position of strength for us.

Autonomy

Until a bisexual woman questions, confronts and accepts herself positively as a bisexual woman, she is likely to feel like two separate people walking around in the same body. She is likely to feel always slightly cut off from the people around her, slightly out of place.

Continued on next page

WE KNOW YOU KNOW

that SOJOURNER is Boston's women's newspaper. But do you subscribe? If so, then you get the paper much faster—and give us much-needed support. So why not arrange to get the news, calendar listings, and other wonderful things we offer before they're available on newsstands? Just send your name and address (and \$15) to: SOJOURNER, 143 Albany St., Cambridge, MA 02139. Your writing, photos, and ads are also welcome, of course; just call 661-3567 for details.

Continued from previous page

everywhere. Put off by the claims of separatists and heterosexuals, yet identifying with the rejection each group feels at the hands of the other, she often feels more defined by what she is *not* than by what she is.

I think that one of the most interesting features of a bisexual identification is that no one lover can confirm our sexuality, no one relationship can represent it. Apart from wearing a badge or a sign, or visibly being part of a three-way relationship with another woman and a man (not likely to appeal, I should think, to many women as a long-term prospect!), there is no way to project a bisexual sexuality. This makes it particularly necessary for bisexual women to be clear about their own identity, as it is likely to be only that sense of ourselves which does make the identification possible and real.

When we have a strong, positive bisexual identification we feel like much more than just the same physical space occupied by two realities. Besides 'confused', the other word used by most women in answering my questionnaire was 'whole'.

'For the first time I felt like a whole person.'

'Bisexuality has meant a further development of my personality, I am wholer.'

'My sexuality has caused me problems because it was too broad to be acceptable to me, as I was trying to force it into narrow definitions - first heterosexual, and second, lesbian . . . I cannot switch off one half or the other of my nature, *nor do I want to*.'

It seems to me that bisexuality has a built-in potential for personal autonomy. For me, and at least some other bisexual feminists, it is our bisexuality which is one of the starting-points in our quest for personal autonomy within sexual relationships. Whether or not we choose to have relationships at all, or whether we have relationships which are monogamous or not, there is an element in our sexuality which, by its very nature, keeps us from identifying ourselves completely with our lovers. Though our bodies and hearts be faithful unto death, our sexuality can never belong to anyone but ourselves.

At the moment my thinking about personal autonomy is based on two lines of searching. One is my own experience of developing a kind of non-monogamous relationship which works. The other is a fantasy of developing a kind of emotional celibacy which would allow women to have sexual relationships with other people while keeping intact our personal integrity.

Political implications: coming out

Coming out is still an area of confusion for me. Women who answered my questionnaire said different things about this. Some felt that bisexuality is a challenge to heterosexual ideology.

'I see bisexuality as very important politically (though risks of betrayal do abound) but it means to me admitting your full commitment to women on every level (which perhaps a committed heterosexual would be holding back from somewhere) but also believing that men can change and must be confronted.'

'I feel bisexuality is similar to lesbianism in its refusal of heterosexual norms, its rejection of male-defined sexuality, its love of femaleness and independence from maleness.'

Other women felt that bisexuality is uncomfortably amenable to being defined in male terms.

I feel I'm a lesbian feminist first who occasionally gives some energy to men in a way I hope is meaningful. Men are not any

priority for me. I would have to understand how bisexual feminists define their relations with men in respect to their relations with women before I would feel any degree of commitment politically and emotionally to the label 'bisexual'. It still feels like a cop-out.

Still others felt that the importance of coming out bisexual is that of being more honest in building our politics on our day-to-day reality.

'I now don't feel so confined or defined by my sexuality . . . Bisexuality is a reality of my feelings and I don't want to deny that, but to question it.'

'Since bisexuality does not completely reject the possibility of some kind of sexual-emotional congress with men, I don't know if that makes it a weaker political statement than lesbianism, and I don't really care. It's me, and I am not a political statement.'

The problems involved in demonstrating the emergence and radical potential of a woman-centred bisexuality are different within the women's liberation movement and in the outside world because of the different assumptions, values and social structures that operate in each sphere. Even the notion that sexuality has an important political dimension and is therefore an appropriate area for feminist analysis and action, so commonplace within the movement, is practically unheard of anywhere else.

If you show up at certain kinds of events, look a certain way, behave a certain way, it is assumed you are a lesbian; and if you admit to having any sexual relationships with men, it is assumed you are heterosexual. It is very difficult to explain that you are bisexual against the apparent evidence of your heterosexuality or lesbianism, and often feels inappropriate in the context, especially when what you are talking about is more your feelings than your current sexual relationships. Too often, we retreat into silence or slogans.

Yet for our private changes to be politically significant, they *must* be made public. The difficulties and dangers of affirming a positive bisexuality are shared to a certain extent with lesbians and non-conforming heterosexual women. All women who publicly challenge prevailing notions of female sexuality are prey to mental abuse: derision, marginalisation, isolation, ostracism; physical attack and harassment; economic sanctions; loss of security and status; threat of or actual loss of our children; imprisonment, torture and death.

Continued on next page



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AUGUST 4 (Mon) BBWN Introductory Meeting at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Central Square. 7:30pm, Call 497-9555 for info.

AUGUST 8-10 Third Annual Bisexual Summer Retreat, at Another Place, Greenville, NH. Call 782-2901 for further information.

AUGUST 9-17 Gay Games II, San Francisco, CA. G/L Freedom Trail Band will be performing. Call Betty Aubut for info: 497-9555.

AUGUST 24 (Sun) Coordinating Committee Meeting, 6:00pm. Everyone welcome to attend and participate in the direction of YOUR network. Call 497-9555 for location.

AUGUST 25 (Mon) BBWN Volunteer Night, 7:30pm. Come help with odd jobs that keep the network going. Meet some new friends and socialize with other bi women. We always have fun! Call 497-9555 for location.

AUG. 29 - SEPT. 1 EARTH LIFE CELEBRATION - The 7th Maine Healing Arts Festival. For information call Karen Anderson at (617) 861-1625, Camp Hiawatha, Kezar Falls, ME.

SEPT. 5-7 STORYSTONE PRESENTS: The First Annual New Hampshire Storytelling Get Together; hear some of the best stories ever, also workshops on all kinds for professionals, amateurs, and just listeners, at Another Place, Greenville, NH. Call (603) 878-3117 or 9883 for more info.



SEPT. 12-14 MASSAGE: The Healing Art Of Touch: A safe setting where massage therapists will teach different techniques for beginners and advanced students. Also workshops, saunas; more info available one month before weekend. At Another Place, Greenville, NH, Call (603) 878-3117 or 9883 for more information.

SEPT. 13 (Sat) Deadline for October/November Newsletter

SEPT. 17 (Wed) BBWN General Meeting, 7-9pm, at New Words Bookstore, 186 Hampshire Street, Cambridge, Topic to be announced, call 497-9555 for more information.

SEPT. 28 (Sun) Coordinating Committee Meeting, 6:00pm. Everyone welcome to attend and participate in the direction of YOUR network! Call 497-9555 for location.

SEPT. 29 (Mon) BBWN Volunteer Night. Stuffing for the October/November newsletter. A little work, but a lot of fun! The more the merrier, less work for each, and more chit-chat for all! Call 497-9555 for location. Where else can you learn about bulk mail from such a great group of women?!

OCT. 6 (Mon) BBWN Introductory Meeting at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Central Square. 7:30pm, Call 497-9555 for more information.

Sex & Love

New thoughts on old contradictions

Edited by

Sue Cartledge & Joanna Ryan



The Women's Press

Continued from previous page

The problems are different for bisexual, lesbian and heterosexual women because their lives represent different aspects of the challenge to heterosexism and male supremacy. But it seems to me that the difficulties all hinge on taking control over the representation of our sexuality and our sexual relationships - at the same time as we make changes in our lives, we need to be able to communicate the substance and meanings of these changes to other women. Otherwise we are not challenging male supremacy, merely accommodating to it. There must be some way of showing the world that my life as a bisexual woman bears no relation to those dreadful 'Attractive couple seek bi-girl for fun and frolic' advertisements!

How we do this, I still don't know, beyond the stock answer of consciousness-raising at every opportunity. I hope women will say more about how they represent their sexuality in public. Within the movement as well as 'out there', it feels easier to come out amongst people you know and trust, in circumstances which permit you to go into a little detail, to make your life credible. It was important to me to do that within the movement. I wanted to demonstrate that you could have a radical feminist passion and sensibility and still be neither a separatist nor an apologist for men. I needed my public life to reflect my private life. That is, ultimately, what coming out bisexual means for me, affirming the truth of my feelings and creating politically effective ways of making them viable. I like what one woman wrote about how her sexuality and feminist politics were connected:

My sexuality today is a mixture of old patterns and new insights . . . a glorious mish-mash which my feminism is committed to nourishing and developing. Feminist politics must make all our sexualities liveable.



PLEASE! SUPPORT YOUR NETWORK! JOIN BBWN!

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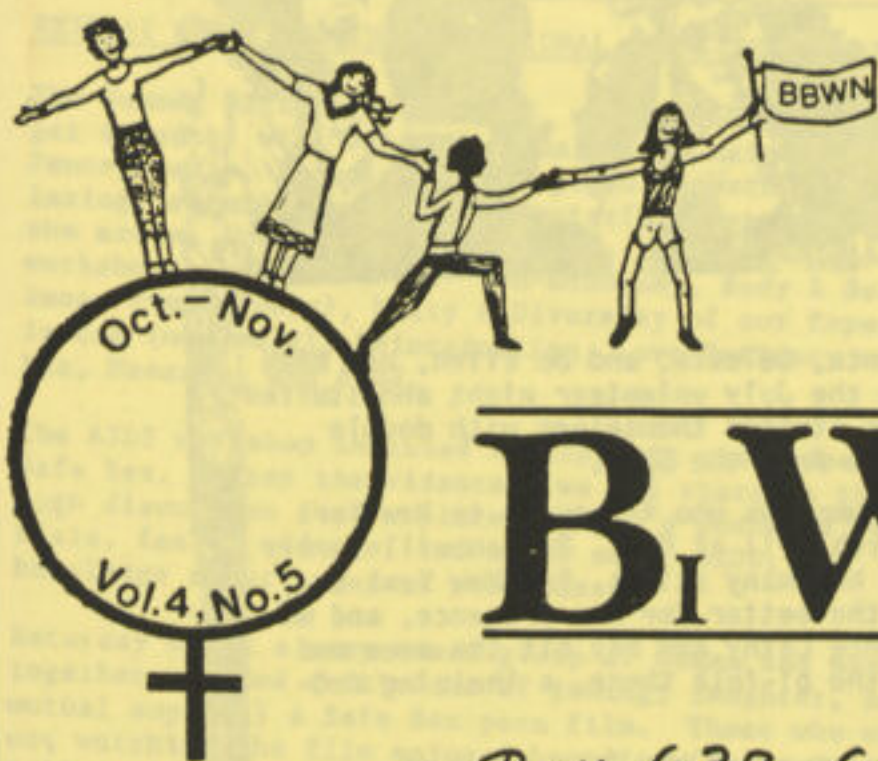
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INDULGE YOUR CREATIVITY.
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B_i W_omen

Box 639, Camb. MA 02140



The Politics of Supporting Lesbianism

GLORIA STEINEM

Why is lesbianism a central issue for all feminists? To put the question a different way, since the personal-is-political, why do I, as a "straight" feminist, feel so strongly that I have a personal interest in supporting lesbianism as a valid life-style?

Those are the questions I've been asked to answer here. I want very much to say to heterosexual feminists that we have clear and self-interested reasons for supporting and defending lesbianism. I want to say to lesbians that there are so-called straight feminists who understand this common cause and can be trusted. (For that matter, I hope that men reading this will feel supported in their questioning of what sexuality and individual human rights are or could be, and the profound political reasons why they, too, are discouraged from discovering their own humanity.) Yet ever since I agreed to contribute to this anthology, I've been wondering just how and where to start. After nine years of working and lecturing and trying to build feminist coalitions, plus reading and witnessing the struggles of countless other feminists, the answers to these questions have progressed from seeming very complex and controversial to being so obvious that they sound condescending when explained. To go back again over this well-traveled road is like trying to recapture the freshness of discovering that control of our reproductive lives is basic to women's freedom.

As it turns out, I needn't have puzzled over the problem. I should have understood that any truth will be proven by everyday life; not just once, but over and over again. All you have to do is wait, pencil in hand.

This time, the catalyst for life's lesson was the Pope's recent edict that women could never be priests in the Catholic Church. (If you'll remember, the Pope

(Continued on page 7)

ADVERSARIA

Commentaries, Remarks, and Notes
Pertaining to Sex Research

The Journal of Sex Research Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 94-100 February, 1983

A LITTLE BIT OF LAVENDER GOES A LONG WAY: A CRITIQUE OF RESEARCH ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION¹

A. P. MacDonald, Jr.

Despite the suspected large numbers of bisexually oriented people, there has been almost no research on bisexuality. More important, the research on homosexuality is thoroughly confounded by the inclusion of large numbers of bisexuals as homosexuals, making that research difficult to interpret. The few studies of bisexuals that have been done are reviewed in this paper. Comparisons show that bisexuals often significantly differ from homosexuals and heterosexuals. Therefore, the practice of combining bisexuals with homosexuals in studies of homosexuals should be discontinued.

Dr. Evelyn Hooker stated in the final report of the National Institute of Mental Health's Task force on Homosexuality (Livingood, 1972): "Thus it is clear that 'Who is homosexual?' and 'What is homosexuality?' are very complex questions, clarification of which would be a lasting contribution to social science" (p. 11). She was referring to definitions that include psychic arousal vs. those which emphasize overt experience, etc. I propose that the confusion is even greater than that. I argue that we have little knowledge concerning homosexuality because the research reviewed by the Task Force and subsequent research is thoroughly confounded by the inclusion of large numbers of bisexuals as "homosexuals."

Over three decades ago, Alfred Kinsey recognized diversity in sexual orientations. Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin and Gebhard (1953) argued that, although some people are exclusively homosexual, whereas others are exclusively heterosexual, there are "a considerable number of persons who include both homosexual and heterosexual responses and/or activities in their histories. . . . This group of persons is identified in the literature as bisexual" (p. 468). However, Kinsey et al. pointed out that bisexuals are considered to be homosexual in the public mind; i.e., anyone known to have had any homosexual experience at all is labeled homosexual. Kinsey and his colleagues remarked that "it would be as reasonable to rate all individuals heterosexual if they have any heterosexual experience, and irrespective of the amount of homosexual experience which they may be having" (p. 469).

Kinsey proposed a homosexual-heterosexual continuum, with exclusive homosexuality on the one end, exclusive heterosexuality on the other end, and bisexuality in the middle. Accordingly, he introduced the 7-point (0-6) Kinsey Scale.² Five of the seven points (1-5) of the scale represent various degrees of bisexuality, perhaps suggesting that bisexuals constitute a large segment of the population. Indeed, Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948) concluded from their study of males that "since only 50% of the population is exclusively heterosexual throughout its adult life, and since only 4% of the population is exclusively homosexual throughout its life, it appears that nearly half (46%) of the population engages in both heterosexual and homosexual activities, or reacts to persons of both sexes, in the course of their adult lives" (p. 656).

(Continued on page 5)

The newsletter of The Boston Bisexual Women's Network

NEWSLETTER STAFF THIS ISSUE:
Blake Walton, Editor, layout; Laura Sachs, Co-Editor,
Calendar, Typing: Mirta P., Contributor.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THOSE WOMEN WHO HAVE DONATED THEIR
TIME TO BBWN OVER THE LAST TWO MONTHS:

Joanna A., Betty Aubut, Kris B., Jo Ellen B., Cathy
Cummings, Mary-Charlotte Domandi, Sharon Gonsalves,
Celeste H., Beth Imhoff, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Robyn
Ochs, Mirta P., Laura Sachs, Theresa, Blake Walton,
Lisa Woody.

WITHOUT THE ENERGY OF THESE WOMEN AND OTHERS, BBWN
WOULD NOT EXIST. MANY THANKS.

heterosexism can be cured!

C. C. Minutes, 7/27/86

Present: [REDACTED], Beth Imhoff, Cathy Cummings,
Betty Aubut, Robyn Ochs, [REDACTED], Laura Sachs

1) Robyn and [REDACTED] will be participating on panels
at the upcoming Unity and Diversity Conference, being
held at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. (see
calendar for more info).

2) There will be an answering machine with an incoming
line only for use by both the women's and men's networks,
as well as the East Coast Bisexual Network (ECBN, for-
merly the Northeast Regional Committee). There will
be a \$60.00 start up cost and \$180.00 annual cost to
be split between the three sponsors. There are still
issues to be ironed out re: message pickup, etc., and
we anticipate implementation of the "Bi-line" in a
few months. We really need volunteers to help make
this work. There is no counseling involved. Come
to a CC meeting or call Laura (566-1567) or [REDACTED].

3) Implementation of a Bulletin Board has been put
on hold for further discussion; in particular, fee
structure, firm guidelines, and two people to or-
ganize and run it.

4) Beth suggested moving the mail box from Jamaica
Plain to Cambridge since no one involved in the
coordinating committee currently lives there. The
suggestion passed unanimously

— [REDACTED] (edited by Laura Sachs)



GOSSIP COLUMN

Welcome to Kris, Mirta, Celeste, and Jo Ellen, new BBWN
members who came to the July volunteer night and stuffed
newsletters (& then stuffed themselves with double
chocolate mousse cake from the S&S).

Good luck to Cathy Cummings who is moving to New York
to study sex (yes, really!) at NYU. Boston will surely
miss her energy and her many skills. But New York &
New Jersey will be the better for her presence, and we
fully expect that once Cathy and Ray hit the area and
start working with the bi-folk there, a thriving net-
work will emerge.

Marcia Deihl hit the cover of the July issue of
Sojourner, with an article ("Still Guilty After all
These Years") discussing, among many other things,
bisexuality. (See excerpt this issue.)

Jean K., who has been in Australia for over a year and
a half, is expected to return any day. Welcome home!

Congrats to Charnan B. on yet another promotion at work!

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Balance as of 7/15/86 \$505.89

Expenses

Printing	203.22
Mailing	100.00
Buttons	40.00
Sojourner ad for Brunch	20.00
New Words General Meeting Space	4.00
Supplies	23.98

Total \$391.20

Income

Membership Dues 501.00

Total 501.00

Balance as of 9/21/86 \$615.89

HAVING A MOVING EXPERIENCE?

Please notify BBWN. The post office will not forward
bulk mail, and it costs us a lot of money when your
newsletters are returned. And, even worse, you won't
get your newsletter!

DOONESBURY by Garry Trudeau



RETREAT REPORT/NORTHEAST REGIONAL COMMITTEE UPDATE:

The Summer Retreat, Aug. 8-10, was a great time to get together with other Bisexuals from Maine to Pennsylvania. Participants enjoyed sunbathing, relaxing, swimming at a nearby waterfall, vegging in the sauna, attending a Sweatlodge, and attending workshops that included: Non-monogamy, Body & Self-Image (women only), Unity & Diversity of our Experiences (men only), Reincarnation, Love-Intimacy and Sex, Massage, and AIDS.

The AIDS workshop included an explicit videotape on Safe Sex. After the videotape we all shared a thorough discussion that explored people's concerns, denials, fears, sadness, and anger about AIDS, and knowledge about safe sex practices.

Saturday night a very mixed group of women and men together watched (with lots of joking, laughter, and mutual support) a Safe Sex porn film. Those who were not watching the film enjoyed booging in the Great Hall, while others shared conversation and watermelon inside and outside the house.

Another opportunity provided by the Retreat was for members of the Northeast Regional Committee to meet.

The N.E.R.C., which has sponsored the Summer Retreat and the Annual Conference on Bisexuality decided to acknowledge that it and these events are, in fact, the work of a network of bisexual women and men from throughout the Northeast of the U.S.. In so acknowledging these points, we decided to change the name to the Steering Committee of the East Coast Bisexual network.

The Committee is currently composed of two members of BBWN, one member of BBMW (Boston Bisexual Men's Network), and four other people representing less formally organized regions as follows: 1) Northern New England; 2) Rhode Island/Connecticut; 3) New York/New Jersey; 4) Southern Region

The following are the current ECBN Steering Committee Contact List:

Robyn Ochs, 617-576-1066, BBWN Rep.
 Laura Sachs, 617-566-1567, BBWN Rep.
 Scott Lewis, 617-267-0049, BBMN Rep.
 Ginny LaCrow, 207-780-4083, Northern New England Rep.
 Charles Guttman, 401-274-7662, RI/CT Rep.
 Melanie J. S. Petajon, 201-763-5302, NY/NJ Rep.
 [redacted], Southern Region Rep. (contact by writing to the PO Box or by calling Laura Sachs)

One of the topics discussed by members of the ECBN included: reaching out to bisexual individuals and groups on down the Atlantic Coast, establishing closer connections with other groups throughout the U.S. and other countries, as well as that at some point there will probably be the need to establish an international network.



BETH WALSH

MASSAGE POLARITY

617-576-1493

617-623-7258



ESTELLA AND LLOYD REALIZED QUITE EARLY IN LIFE THAT THEY WERE NOT LIKE OTHER CHILDREN.

A little closer to home however, we also discussed and approved a 1/3 sponsorship (with BBWN & BBMN) of an incoming only telephone line with an answering machine, as well as establishing guidelines for an Expenditure Approval Policy.

Members of the ECBN steering committee will be receiving minutes of the meeting and at such time will be able to report more fully the decisions made to their respective network coordinating committees.

All in all, the entire Retreat weekend was geared to provide a warm, loving, and fun atmosphere for people to explore, enjoy, and grow in their Bisexuality, as well as the continued building of our Bisexual Community!

As a member of the BBWN coordinating committee, the ECBN Steering Committee, and a Co-organizer of the 1986 Summer Retreat I can not say enough about the wonderful and magnificent people I have had the great opportunity to meet, work, laugh, argue, hug, and collapse in great exhaustion with. I would like to take this opportunity to especially thank [redacted], Cathy Cummings, Pepper Greene, Alan Hamilton, Woody Glenn and Ray Schnitzler for making working on the Retreat such a spectacular experience. We accomplished our goals with flying colors!

--Love, Laura Sachs

WALTER SCOTT'S

Personality Parade

Q Are there any really authoritative statistics on the number or percentage of lesbians in this country?—N.M., Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

A In his 1953 book "Sexual Behavior in the Human Female," the late Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey estimated that 11% to 20% of women might be classified as lesbian, based on data provided by 8000 American women. It was Kinsey's contention, however, that many were not all-heterosexual or all-homosexual but had engaged in at least "some" homosexual experience—which, of course, did not classify them as definitely bisexual. Some sexologists believe that even a figure of 11% is too high.

OPENING CLOSETS, OPENING MINDS: A Bisexual Woman's Story

By Marcia Deihl

Everybody knows about bisexuals--they're CONFUSED ("just a stage you're going through...you'll eventually choose...you're not secure in your mature heterosexual-ity yet...you're afraid of the opposite sex and the same sex is less threatening..."); they're SEX MANIACS ("they will do it with anyone, anytime..."); they're SHALLOW ("they can't commit themselves to anyone person or even any one sex for a long-term, deep relationship... typical 'swingers'... fickle").

Well, having been a self-named bisexual woman for the last seventeen years, let me just relate my experience. Confused? I have been deeply in love with men and women. Being in love with women was frowned upon by society, and, therefore, harder to live with in terms of the outside world, but inside was the important part. It was an irreversibly empowering part of my life, and gave me a gentle power and love of my own kind that changed me profoundly with women and men from that point onward.

It was most definitely not a phase. Spiritually, emotionally, historically, it thrives within me, even if I am now with a man. Nymphomaniac? For many years, my bisexuality was solely spiritual, emotional, political. It set the stage for the physical component, which seemed to follow naturally. Gay, straight, and bisexual people all vary widely in terms of individual appetite. Fickle? Personally, I've been a one-person gal my whole life--they call it serial monogamy. Yet I have never aspired to marrying and doing the accepted family patterns if I didn't feel good doing them. I have been in love with a man at times and I have been in love with a woman at other times. Of course, I have yearned for additional flings with others (of both sexes, regardless of who I was with) just like any other human being in love. (Even Jimmy Carter has confessed to "lusting in his heart.") Fidelity is just another individual decision and varies widely for all-- gay, straight, or bisexual.

For me, naming myself as a bisexual feels true and feels fun. And there may be others who feel the same way, but simply haven't heard the information that there is a third option in terms of a lifetime sexuality.

"Speak truth to power" is no idle phrase. The ability to name myself as a bisexual released years of pent-up pro-gay energy. Ironically, as a bisexual, I am more active in gay politics than I ever was as a "lesbian."

by Marcia Deihl

August 1986—SOJOURNER

Sexuality and Style

For six years I played in a feminist band with pro-gay politics. Half of that time I spent with a significant male and the other half with a significant female. In each case, I experienced the strange sensation of "winning" in one world but "losing" in the other, feeling acceptable in either the mainstream or the radical/feminist world. When I was with him, my playing pro-lesbian music in public led many women I didn't know well to assume I was a lesbian (I think). I wrote in my diary at the time, "It's harder for straight women in the women's movement—there are fewer fringe benefits."

I held off till age twenty-six. Always a rebel, I liked being "different," i.e., straight while most of my friends

were lesbians. Finally, I was foiled by an irresistible woman. When I was with her, my co-workers and family still assumed I was straight. Since I was a newcomer to the gay community, I felt like I didn't really "qualify" yet to subscribe to *GCN*, and I was afraid to come completely "out." But all along, in dreams and fantasies, both men and women were there, and I had called myself a bisexual since about age twenty. So I was one of the first in line when the organized bisexual movement began with the 1982 meeting at the Women's Center in Cambridge.

For the first time, I felt accepted (at worst, tolerated) by the gay community. "Speak truth to power" is no idle phrase. The ability to name myself at my deepest sexual level released years



of pent-up pro-gay energy. Ironically, as a bisexual, I am more active in gay politics than I ever was as a "lesbian." I can't see how any feminist could be anti-gay. Ten years ago, I felt as if there were implications that a feminist couldn't be straight, and we've made some progress since then. Reaganomics, along with some rude economic awakenings for some of us ex-hippies, has given us the need to seek out and nurture *allies*. We need all the Sister Outsiders we can get, and not just in regard to sexual politics. And since I no longer see a violent revolution in the U.S. as an immediate possibility, I need a long-term, room-for-all-levels-of-commitment politics. Hence, I find myself sitting next to "liberals" a lot more.

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that SOJOURNER is Boston's women's newspaper. But do you subscribe? If so, then you get the paper much faster—and give us much-needed support. So why not arrange to get the news, calendar listings, and other wonderful things we offer before they're available on newsstands? Just send your name and address (and \$15) to: SOJOURNER, 143 Albany St., Cambridge, MA 02139. Your writing, photos, and ads are also welcome, of course; just call 661-3567 for details.

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Even those who accept bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation find themselves in heated debate over definitional issues: What role should self-identification play?³ Should erotic fantasy be considered or should only overt behaviors be considered? Is it legitimate to identify all who have had sexual relations with both genders as bisexual even if sex with one gender took place in early childhood and was never repeated as an adult? Must one have engaged in overt genital sex with members of both genders to be identified as bisexual? These and many more questions need to be resolved. The purpose of this paper is not to attempt to resolve these issues. All of these questions rest on one common assumption: that bisexually oriented people do exist.⁴

In his book, *The Bisexual Option*, Klein (1978, p. 117) claims that between 30 to 45% of the male population are definable on the Kinsey Scale as bisexual and 15 to 35% of the female population fit that description; i.e., there are about 30 to 40 million bisexuals in the United States. Therefore, (though he presents no explicitly supporting data) if Klein is correct, bisexually oriented people constitute a rather sizable proportion of the population; a proportion at least considerably larger than the exclusively homosexual population. A number of sex researchers agree with him (e.g., Blumstein & Schwartz, 1974), and the famed Margaret Mead proposed that bisexually inclined human beings are "probably a majority" (Mead, 1975, p. 29). However, the actual percentages of bisexuals need yet to be documented.

Despite the claims that bisexuals constitute a large segment of the population there is a paucity of research on the subject. Blumstein and Schwartz (1974, 1976a, 1976b, 1977; Schwartz & Blumstein, 1976) have reported their qualitative analyses of intensive interviews done with 78 male and 78 female bisexuals. Few conclusions are drawn and no comparisons with exclusively homosexual or heterosexual individuals were made. I have found only two studies in which bisexuals, heterosexuals, and homosexuals have been compared (Ellis, 1962; Kenyon, 1968).

Kenyon (1968) compared 77 bisexual women (1-5 on the Kinsey Scale), 46 exclusively homosexual (Kinsey 6), and 123 exclusively heterosexual (Kinsey 0) women. The three groups were found to be significantly different from one another in many ways too numerous to report here. A few examples are: (all statistically significant) (a) bisexuals (48%) began menstruation earlier (before 13 years of age) than the lesbians (22%) or heterosexuals (39%), whereas lesbians were overrepresented among those who began menstruation after 13 years of age (lesbians, 42%; bisexuals, 31%; and heterosexuals, 34%), (b) premenstrual oedema was experienced by only 34% of the lesbians, but was experienced by over 50% of the bisexuals and heterosexuals, (c) 67% of the les-



biens said they resented menstruation, as compared to 42% of the bisexuals and 15% of the heterosexuals, (d) more bisexuals (30%) attended universities than lesbians (21%) or heterosexuals (15%) (though bisexuals were significantly different from lesbians and heterosexuals the latter two groups did not differ from each other), (e) bisexuals tended to be more religious than lesbians, (f) more bisexuals (22%) than lesbians (7%) felt guilty about their homosexuality, and (g) only 13% of the lesbians compared to 40% of the bisexuals said they felt fully feminine. Overall, Kenyon's study shows that bisexual females differ from both lesbians and heterosexual women and, therefore, should not be included as "homosexuals" in homosexual study samples.

In a more recent study of homosexuality, Bell and Weinberg (1978) had black and white male and female subjects rate themselves on the Kinsey Scale twice; once for their behaviors and once for their feelings (desires). Roughly one-third of the respondents indicated bisexual behavior and approximately 40% indicated bisexual desires. The authors inform us (pp. 60-61) that the inclusion of such high percentages of bisexuals is not unusual in surveys of this kind, where deliberate attempts are made to recruit only homosexuals.

Reader's Forum

Dear BBWN,

A suggestion for the women doing the newsletter (which I should add, I enjoy very much and look forward to reading each time)-- when you reprint things (like the 2 newspaper clippings in the Aug/Sept '86 issue) why not put the author, date, and source in? Someone might want to track the sources down, do further research, quote the stuff for a paper or another article, etc. Walter Scott (if that one on page 5 is from "Personality Parade" as it appears to be) deserves fair credit! Thanks for the great blend of personal and theoretical that has characterized the newsletter.
Best-- Joanne T.

Editor's Reply: An excellent request. And, yes, Walter Scott does deserve credit for what he prints! We'll try to do better. Notice the bibliography accompanying "A Little Lavendar Goes a Long Way."

000

Dear BBWN,

So glad you're there! New York group keeps trying & faltering. It's one of those situations--perhaps if I had the energy--but I'm already overloaded. So, I really appreciate the link with you. Knowing others are moving and doing and maybe I'll be able to get to one of your happenings.

-- Joyous

000

Dear BBWN,

Recently we received the following note in the BBWN mailbox: "English couple living in Central London offer hospitality (not accomodations) to visiting bi girl. Phone (01) 794-2897. Ask for Nick."

How does our readership feel about having "personal" ads placed by men in our newsletter? (Would it be different if a woman had placed the ad for herself and her boyfriend? Or just for herself?) Let us know what you think.

--The Editor

BODYWORKS



MARGARITA ASCENCIO
576-1493

53 RIVER STREET, CAMBRIDGE, NR CENTRAL SQUARE (T)

Who Was Sappho?

"Officially the dean of a semi-religious school or 'university' which prepared young women for adult life, she taught them the art of expressing themselves in poetry, dance, and music-- and the art of loving, which was considered essential to the quality of life. Since she was the most widely known person in Lesbos-- as well as celebrated throughout Greece-- she was often called the Lesbian.

"To introduce Sappho, one must speak of her Lesbianism since the word itself designates love such as it was lived on the island of Lesbos, in Sappho's school. Understood as an opening to women rather than an exclusion of men, Sapphic lesbianism does not contradict Aphrodite's myth. Sappho, indeed, taught women and did not turn aside from them when her influence and celebrity reached the masculine world.

"When Judeo-Christianism, in which all forms of intellectual authority became exclusively masculine, it seemed quite natural to speak of 'university' or 'college' without ever grasping that this 'universalism' or this 'collegiality' excluded half of the human species and that there was thereby just as much affective and intellectual homosexuality in these institutions as there was in Sappho's school. Even today, we consider a women's college, or a feminine university, or women's courses as some sort of specialization or reduction. Any feminine grouping is specifically designated by its gender, as if all the male institutions were not men's groups and their teachings not 'men's studies.'

"Those who continue to classify the poems of Sappho as 'Lesbian' are missing the point.... Sappho's poetry is only peripherally Lesbian. Socrates and Plato seem to love only those of their same sex, and their philosophy is quite completely masculine, whereas the work of Sappho has an undeniably universal quality. She, in fact, was the first to use the same words to designate: 1) love between two women; 2) love between men and women; and 3) love between mother and child. Whereas Eros (the Eros who inspired the philosophers) patronized only the homosexual male, Aphrodite and Sappho extended their influence as much to men as to women.

"Nothing leads us to believe that Sappho was hostile to heterosexuality. In several poems, Sappho expresses her regret that a young man has taken away her favorite young woman (poems which a mother could take to heart on the occasion of her daughter's wedding); but on the other hand, many of her poems seem to be marriage hymns. Sappho's lesbianism does not appear to be a refusal of men, but rather a way of refusing to suppress any sexual preference." (pp.39-43)

Excerpts from Pagan Meditations by Ginette Paris; Spring Publications, Dallas, 1986.

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A LITTLE BIT OF LAVENDER (Continued from page 5)

The limited findings reported above indicate that bisexuals differ in significant ways from homosexuals and, therefore, should not be combined with homosexuals in homosexual study samples. The practice of including bisexuals as homosexuals is not peculiar to the productive researchers at the Kinsey Institute; rather, it is standard procedure among sex researchers.

Inclusion of bisexuals as homosexuals may come about as a result of the belief that sexual orientations are truly dichotomous; i.e., either homo- or heterosexual. Therefore, bisexuals are really homosexuals who are engaging in homosexual denial. The most blatant example of this belief can be found in a study by Harry and Lovely (1979). These investigators operationalized exclusive homosexuals (also, most or all of their friends were gay) as "homosexuals with a high commitment to the gay community," and bisexuals (most or all friends were heterosexual) as "homosexuals with a low commitment to the gay community."

It is curious that Harry and Lovely propose that homosexuals take on bisexual identities to avoid the full stigma of a homosexual identity. Even a cursory examination of the literature indicates that bisexuals are themselves stigmatized, especially by homosexuals. For example, Cory (cited in Warren, 1974) comments that the gay community does not accept men married to women: "The submerged group life accepts with hesitance and deep reservation the married man. He is not one of them" (p. 133). Blumstein and Schwartz (1974) remark: "The Lesbian community cannot deny the existence of bisexual behavior, but its members do not encourage it, and they do not easily accept women with a bisexual identification" (p. 292). "Bisexuality meets with antagonism and suspicion in most, although not all, Lesbian Communities".

Perhaps bisexuals are better accepted by heterosexuals. I know of no research on the issue. However, considering the above, it doesn't appear that people can successfully avoid stigma by assuming a bisexual rather than a homosexual identity. Rather, self-identification as either bisexual or homosexual seems to result in becoming the object of prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, it seems that Bell and Weinberg (1978, p. 60) are correct in their claim that respondents' self-ratings of their bisexual orientations are, for the most part, valid, and not merely indicative of homosexual denial.

The practice of treating bisexuals as homosexuals must stop if we are to learn anything about sexual orientations. We seem to know nothing much about bisexuality, and, considering the inclusion of bisexuals in homosexual study samples, how much do we know about homosexuals? We need to conduct studies that compare bisexuals, heterosexuals, and homosexuals. Also, those who do research on homosexuality must be careful when they select their samples. It is no longer legitimate to identify a person as a homosexual simply on the basis of any homosexual experience.

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argued that we lacked a certain crucial resemblance to Jesus Christ.) A radio talk show host, the sort who solicits live on-the-air interviews plus phone calls from listeners, called for a comment on the papal edict. Realizing that I had got trapped into addressing a large radio audience through my telephone, I tried to be as well reasoned as I could about why this edict had mostly to do with enshrining the patriarchal power structure, and little to do with religion.

I hung up the phone—and immediately began to get calls from listeners. It seems that the radio host had ended our polite, scholarly conversation, and then announced to his listening millions: "All right. Now let's hear from some *other* lesbians."

Did our exchange have anything to do with lesbianism? Or with my personal life at all? Of course not. But I had rejected the idea of patriarchy and the power of men to define and restrict women—therefore I must be a lesbian. What else could a non-male-defined woman possibly be?

This was only one experience, and a rather mild one compared to those that many women reading this have certainly had. But it echoes back through the years since I became a feminist, and such incidents first began.

There was my longtime journalist colleague, for instance, who forgot everything he had known about me from the past when my first obviously feminist article was published in 1969. "I never realized Gloria was a lesbian," he announced conspiratorially to a mutual woman friend. "Did she ever... ah... approach you?"

When I began traveling around the country to lecture as a team with a black feminist—first Dorothy Pataki, then Florynce Kennedy and Margaret Sloan—the hostile questions from audiences increased. After all, what could a black woman possibly have in common with a white woman—except sex? The comments grew more hostile when I was lecturing with Margaret Sloan, who was a lesbian and had the courage to publicly say so. How could a heterosexual woman possibly be friends with a lesbian?

Most people did accept our shared reasons for speaking together in each case: to show that feminism included *all* women, and that the twin caste systems of sex and race were interdependent and could only be fought together. But there was often one hostile man in the audience (in our case, always white, and always focusing on me as the one who was inexplicably "slumming"). He asked a question that either assumed or sought to confirm my lesbianism. (The best answer I ever found to a man's head-on query, "Are you a lesbian?" was "Are you my alternative?" Not only did it frustrate the curiosity of the questioner, but it tended to make him sit down.)

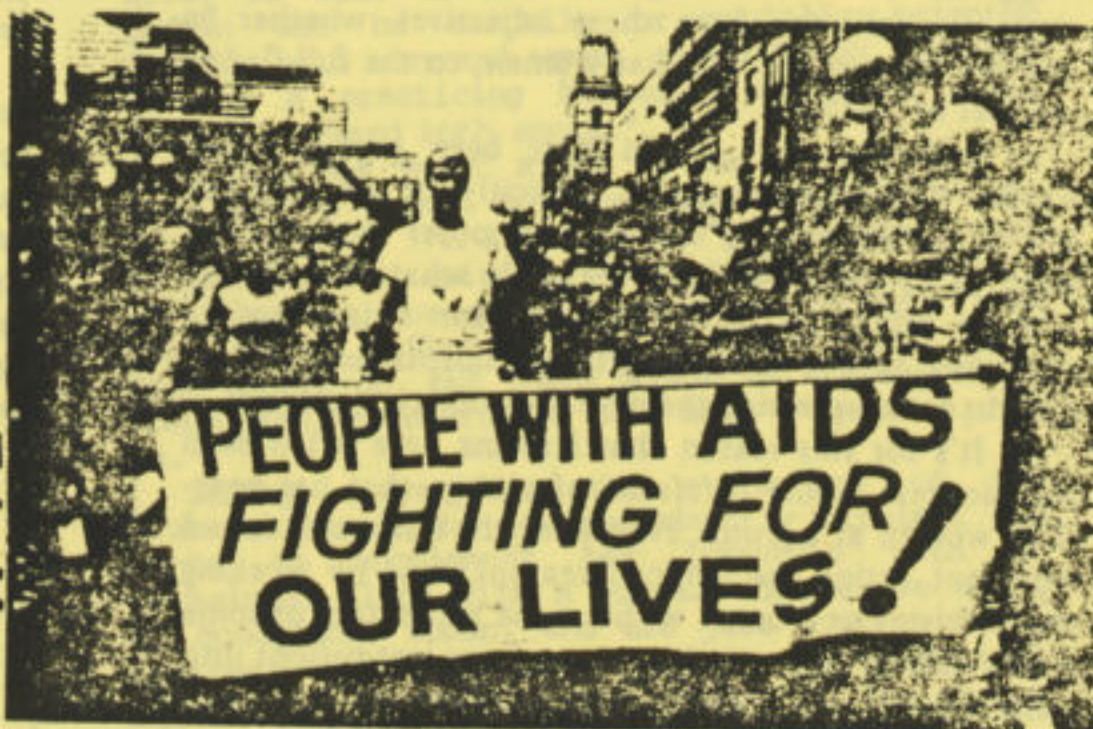
(Continued on page 8)

Excerpts from Lesbian Origins,
by Susan Cavin
Isis Press, San Francisco, 1985.

"No one to date has empirically answered the human sexuality question of origin, as to which came first: asexuality (celibacy), bisexuality, homosexuality, or heterosexuality? or are all the sexualities spontaneously present at origin?...Exclusive heterosexuality may be present at origin, as I expect all sexualities spontaneously are. Yet, exclusive heterosex is not the numerical 'norm' of human sex origin, as patristicists tend to assume. I expect that bisex is more frequent than heterosex."

"Patristicists who claim heterosexist origin, i.e., assuming that no lesbians, bisexuals, or asexuals exist originally and insisting that only heterosexuals populate the original world, are in no empirical position to substantiate their heterosexist ideology."

"Heterosexists assume that the first social relationship is male/female, and thus view the first sexual relation as heterosexual. This is a hypothesis that has yet to be proven. I will argue from the other side of the ideological coin, that the first enduring social relation may be the female/female relation, e.g., mother/daughter, sisters, or cooperation between non-kin mothers for the protection of their young and/or food sharing. This is a hypothesis yet to be proven. Nevertheless, if the first social relation is the female homosocial relation, then its corresponding sexual relation is lesbianism." (pp.40-43)



1987 CONFERENCE

Yes folks, it's that time of year again. Time to start organizing for the FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE on BISEXUALITY!!

Please answer the following question:

Should I work on the conference because....

- a) I went last year and really enjoyed it?
- b) I have some ideas that I'd like to share?
- c) It's a great way to meet some spectacular Bis? (and others?)
- d) I worked on it last year and had lots of fun?
- e) Have never worked on a BBWN event before and think it would be a great way to get involved?
- f) All or some of the above?

Well, you win the prize regardless of your answer. If you have even the slightest bit of interest or curiosity about this upcoming event or are just bursting to be involved, please contact Laura at 566-1567 and leave a message. All calls will be discreetly returned.

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The Politics of Supporting Lesbianism (from page 7)

I'm not suggesting that these events are equal to the punishments suffered by women who are lesbians. As Charlotte Bunch has pointed out, women can only begin to guess at those penalties by living as a lesbian for a while. "Announce to everyone—family, roommate, on the job, everywhere you go," Bunch suggests to heterosexual feminists, "that you are a lesbian. Imagine your life, economically and emotionally, with women instead of men. For a whole week, experience life as if you were lesbian, and you will learn quickly what heterosexual privileges and assumptions are . . . and that self-loving and independent women are a challenge to the idea that men are superior, an idea that social institutions strengthen and enshrine."¹

Furthermore, to say that lesbian and heterosexual feminists could or should share exactly the same experience and viewpoint would be to limit the full human range of insights, and therefore the complete human knowledge, that feminism hopes to set free. As Bunch wisely pointed out, "True unity is grounded not on a false notion of sameness, but on understanding and utilizing diversity to gain the greatest possible scope and power."²

The lesson of my experience—and that of other women who have acted on their belief in feminism, whether they also have a husband and children or not—is simply that sooner or later, all nonconforming women are likely to be labeled lesbians. True, we start out with the smaller punishments of being called "pushy" or "aggressive," "man-hating" or "unfeminine." But it's only a small step from those adjectives, whether bestowed by men or by other women, to the full-fledged epithet of "lesbian."

Prefeminism, I would have been hurt by that word. I might have denied it explicitly, or modified my offending "unfeminine" behavior in order to deny it by word or by deed. And that's exactly what the accusers have in mind: to scare female human beings out of exercising all our human rights and talents, and thus to keep us from upsetting the male-superiority applecart.

It's for this reason that lesbians have often been the pioneers at the forefront of change that has benefited women as a group, even when the lesbians involved were not acting for feminist reasons. Just by working and surviving as women without the protection of some status vis-à-vis a man, lesbians may force institutions into some acceptance of women on their own. And this pioneering act helps break a barrier for all autonomous women.



Self-hatred is the blight of every discriminated-against group; lesbians no less than any other.

But the positive, conscious, affirmative act of choosing to identify with your own "inferior" group, of refusing to be defined by the rules of the "superior" one—that is revolutionary. And male supremacists know a revolutionary act, in sexuality or any other area, when they see one.

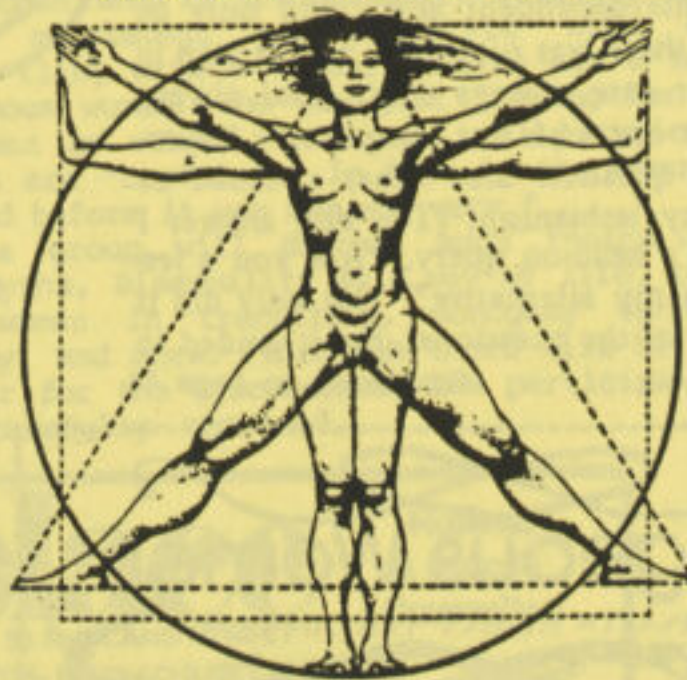
In a practical, day-to-day sense, therefore, all feminists have a self-interest in taking the sting out of the word "lesbian," and making it as honorable a life-style as any other. Until we do, we ourselves will continue to be limited by fear of losing jobs and career possibilities (not to mention housing, child custody suits, credit, and access to public accommodations) because of this accusation; or at a minimum, of losing society's esteem and our friends' or family's approval. As long as we shrink back in fear from the word "lesbian," we are giving it the power to keep all women in line.

Acting together with other women and becoming self-identified, female-identified, is a very long and inevitable part of gaining the power to reach a humanistic society in which we can integrate female and male, black and white as individual, equally powerful human beings.

And the truth is that heterosexual feminists *ourselves* will remain male-identified and "man junkies" to some degree until we dare to kick the habit of identifying with, and being given our self-image by, the patriarchy. That practice of female identification and autonomy, whether sexual or not, is exactly what much of society condemns as lesbian.

The allowing or restricting of homosexual and lesbian sexuality, or any heterosexual forms that do not result in conception, has also been controlled by the same societies—and for exactly the same reasons: the need to manipulate sexuality so it produces (or curtails) the production of population. After all, witches were rebellious women who also taught contraception and performed abortion in a time when the Church and State wanted a growing population. (Continued on page 9)

SEXUALITY AND SELFLOVE



A one-day workshop for women to (re)discover the power and beauty of our sexual selves.

OCTOBER 18/ NOVEMBER 15 Eve Cohen: 628-7687

(Continued from page 8)

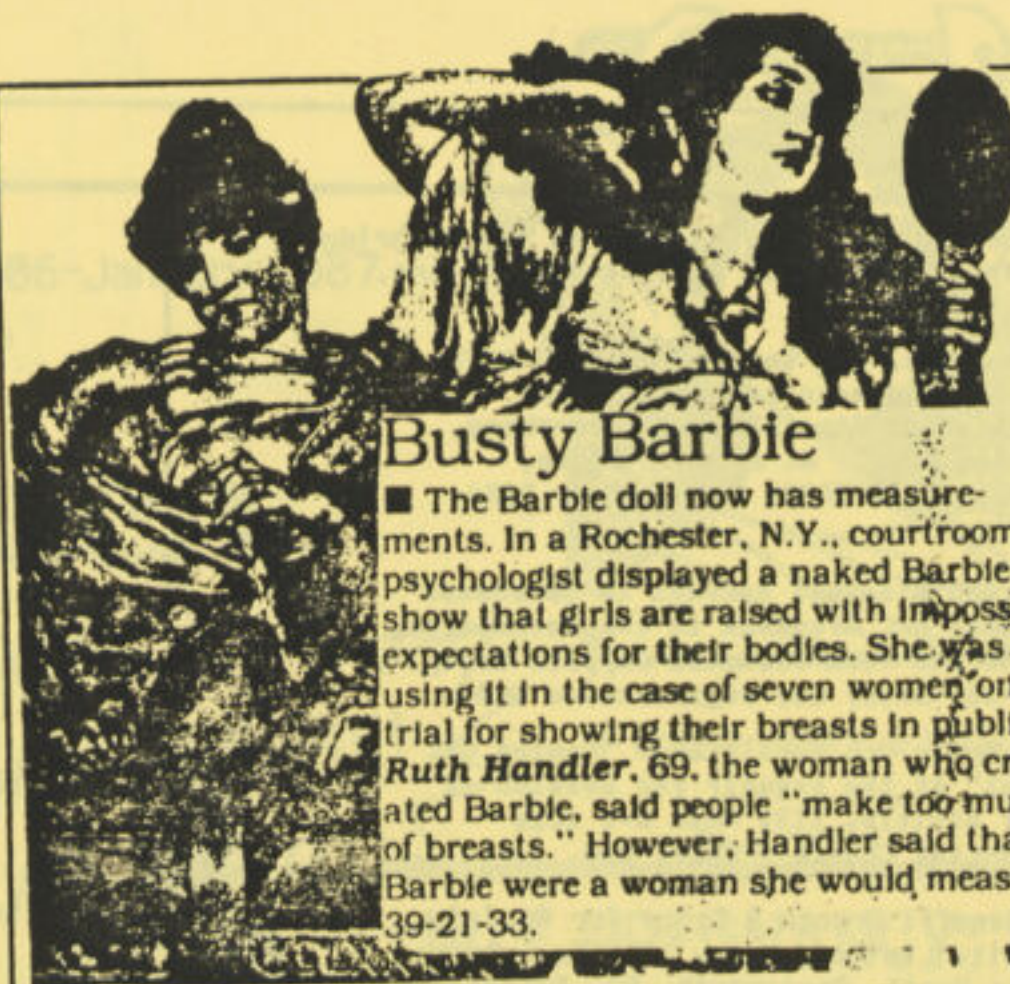
What we are doing, together, is struggling to expand the area of individual human rights to include reproductive freedom. That's especially important to women, since we must assert power over our own bodies, the basic means of production, before we will have any control of our lives. But it's also important to men whose sexuality is being politically governed. After all, human beings are the only animals capable of experiencing orgasm at times when we cannot conceive. That means sexuality is also a form of expression, of reaching out and communicating with each other, and not only a way of reproducing.

It's this human birthright that patriarchy has taken away from us as individuals. It has restricted us all for its own political, self-perpetuating reasons.

There will continue to be those who say to feminists, "Don't mention lesbianism. Never support the cause of male homosexuals. You will only damage your cause." But we must look at our longer term goals and our real self-interest. We must understand that what we are attempting is a revolution, not a public-relations movement. As long as we fear the word "lesbian," we are curtailing our own strength and abandoning our sisters. As long as human sexuality is politically controlled, we will all be losing a basic human freedom.

By working together, we have our full selves and the future to gain.

Excerpted from Our Right to Love;
Vida, ed. 1978.



Busty Barbie

■ The Barbie doll now has measurements. In a Rochester, N.Y., courtroom, a psychologist displayed a naked Barbie to show that girls are raised with impossible expectations for their bodies. She was using it in the case of seven women on trial for showing their breasts in public. **Ruth Handler**, 69, the woman who created Barbie, said people "make too much of breasts." However, Handler said that if Barbie were a woman she would measure 39-21-33.



BISEXUAL SUPPORT GROUP FOR WOMEN FORMING
(from the Seattle Gay News, July 1985)

by Caitlin Sullivan

"We started the group out of sheer frustration," says Jet Tenley, organizer of a new Bisexual Women's support group. "There is no group meeting in Seattle that is aimed at this segment of the population."

Tenley describes the new group as being for women who have chosen bisexuality as a way of life, as well as for women in transition. "A person can be sexually or mentally oriented towards both men and women, even though they may not be a practicing bisexual, they are still oriented toward both sexes."

Tenley has spent a lot of her time trying to find such a group, but her experiences have been disappointing. "A lot of these groups would just be places for weirdos, or men who are voyeurs just looking for a bisexual woman to make them feel better. That's fine, I really don't care what people do, but there should be a place where women feel comfortable and aren't getting hit on."

Tenley demystifies the stereotype of the bisexual woman who is predominantly straight and wants to supplement her lifestyle with an occasional fling with a woman. "There are a lot of monogamous women, who are just looking for a partner, man or woman. It's not really typical that women are 'cruising', in fact in the groups I've joined before it was men who were."

Tenley's group will discuss such topics as Bisexual Myths, Bisexuality as a way of life, the Bisexual woman in transition, monogamy versus nonmonogamy, and more. Although there will be no facilitator for the discussions, the participants will be carefully screened.

J.F. RIVKIN SILVERGLASS

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Calendar

OCT. 6 (Mon) BBWN introductory Meeting at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Central Square. 566-1567, 776-6692.

OCT 10-13 12th Annual New England HEALING ARTS Fair; Workshops & demonstrations by many healers of different disciplines, networking, sunning, camping, FUN! At Another Place, Greenville, NH. Call (603) 878-3117 or 9883 for more information.

OCT. 10-13 Autumn Bisexual Retreat in Northwest Massachusetts near Mt. Greylock in the Berkshires, sponsored by the New York Bisexual Support Group. Call Bill (212-569-3636) for registration info.

OCT. 14 (Tues) Robyn Och facilitates "Coming Out as a Bisexual" at the regular rap session at Daughters of Bilitis, 1151 Mass Ave (Old Cambridge Baptist Church), Camb. 8pm.

OCT. 12 (Sun) Benefit Brunch & Dance for Rosie's Place. The City Limited, a new club for women: Rte 1 By-Pass North, Portsmouth, NH. Reservations: 965-4748.

OCT. 18 (Sat) March and rally for Reproductive Rights with focus on Question #1, an anti-abortion referendum to appear on state ballot Nov. 4. Organized by the Gay & Lesbian Defense Committee, the Reproductive Rights National Network (Boston), Mobilization for Survival, Boston NOW, and the Alliance Against Women's Oppression. Assemble in Copley Square at 11:30am, the march will take place at noon and the rally at Gov't. Center at 1:00pm. The event is wheelchair accessible with wheelchair accessible van available for march route, also ASL interpreted. Call 782-1056 for further info. All are welcome to participate.

OCT. 18 (Sat) SEXUALITY AND SELFLOVE: A day of sensual exploration for women. (Re) discover the power and beauty of our sexual selves. Through meditation, bodywork, discussion, humor, massage, explore the intricacies of erotic expression, and learn to translate our sex energy into a passion for life. Eve Cohen, PO Box 1365, Somerville, MA 02144-1365. 628-7687.



OCT. 18 (Sat) Women And A.I.D.S., a conference sponsored by Fenway Community Health Ctr. Suffolk Univ., 55 Temple St., Boston. 8:30am-6:30pm. Registration by 10/8: FCHC, 16 Haviland St., Boston, MA 02115.

OCT. 18-19 Celebrate our Unity and Diversity Conference at Hampshire College, Amherst, MA. for more information leave a message at 413-774-7998.

OCT. 24 (Fri) FEMME CORE SPACE: showing political art by women. Reception, 8pm with visual art, performance, poetry, slides, & video. Gallery hours: Sat, Oct. 25 & Sun., Oct. 26 from noon to 6pm. 464 Harrison Ave, corner of Thayer St. in the South End (Dover T stop, Orange Line). 734-1672, 734-9348, 350-7598.

OCT. 25 (Sat) Fall Foliage Walk, sponsored by the Boston Bisexual Men's Network (BBMN). Let's get together for an afternoon walk through the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in Concord, MA. We will meet at 1:00pm at the parking lot of the Fresh Pond Shopping Center, next to Friendly's Restaurant. This is close to the Alewife stop of the Red Line. Participants will consolidate for the drive to Concord and will return at about 6:00pm. In case of inclement weather or for more information, please call Jon, 617-522-3155.

OCT. 26 (Sun) Coordinating Committee Meeting, 6:00pm. Everyone welcome to attend and participate in the direction of YOUR network! Robyn's. Call 776-6692 for more info.

OCT. 27 (Mon) BBWN Volunteer Night, 7:30pm. Come help with odd jobs that keep the network going. Meet some new friends and socialize with other bi women. We always have fun!! Robyn's, Call 776-6692 for more info.

NOV. 7 (Fri) Connie Kaldor in glorious concert at the Somerville Theatre, Davis Square. Produced by Robyn Ochs. 8pm. 547-5704.

NOV. 15 (Sat) SEXUALITY AND SELFLOVE (See listing for October 18 above.)

ONGOING: ROCK AGAINST SEXISM holds disc-parties ("Tea Dances") the last Sunday of every month from 6-10pm at the 1270 Club, 1270 Boylston St. Dance the evening away to non-sexist rock 'n roll!

Nov. 19. General Meeting
"Women Who Love Too
Much" 7pm
186 Hampshire St.
Camb.

Dec. 8 - Intro Meeting
Women's Center
46 Pleasant St.
Cambridge 7:30pm

NAME

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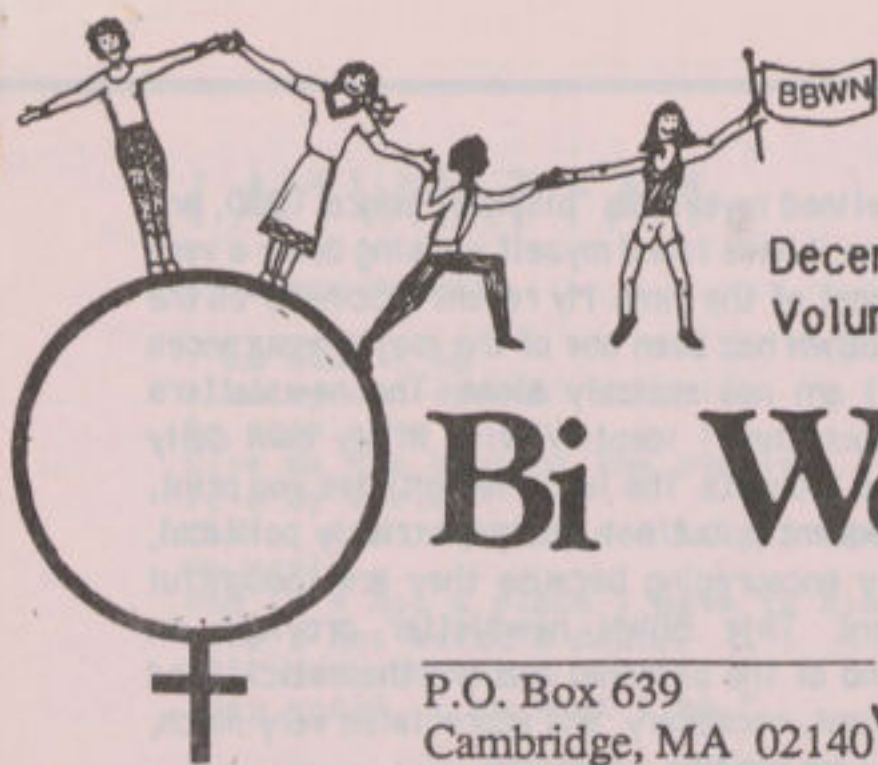
☐ I am not interested in being a member but have enclosed a donation.

☐ I am unable to send money at this time but want to be on the mailing list.

Make checks payable to

BBWN, P.O. Box 639, Cambridge MA 02140

Nov. 23. CCMtg
Nov 24 Vol Nite
Call 776-6692



December 1986-January 1987
Volume 4, #6

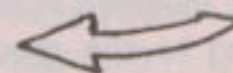
Bi Women

P.O. Box 639
Cambridge, MA 02140

NEW ADDRESS!!!



"Please make a note of it."



BISEXUALITY: COPING WITH SEXUAL BOUNDARIES

by

Mariana Valverde

RUTH IS TWENTY-SIX, single, and a strong feminist. While she was attending university on the West Coast, she discovered feminism and almost simultaneously got drawn into a campus feminist group which turned out to be 100 percent lesbian. At first she was a bit shocked. But soon she began to see the world through lesbian eyes, and it did not take long before she was flirting quite openly with Kate, a lesbian whom she thought might be interested in "initiating" her. At first Kate was not receptive, not wanting to get involved with such a greenhorn, but Ruth's persistence paid off. The two women had a passionate affair that lasted eight months—until Kate's ex-lover returned from a year of study in Montreal and wooed Kate back. Ruth was very hurt but she played it cool. A year and two meaningless flings later, she left to go back East. There, living in a small Ontario town, she more or less forgot about her lesbianism, and a few months after moving back she got involved with a male musician. She told him something of her relationship with Kate, but he did not take it seriously, and simply said, "Oh don't worry, it doesn't bother me." So she did not bring it up again. She still subscribed to a couple of lesbian publications, and when they came in the mail she made a point of putting them where her male lover would not see them, without thinking about why.

Lynn is a lesbian, and her friend Laurie, who is a member of the same women's group, is bisexual. When they found that their friendship was quickly acquiring a sexual tinge, they both got a little frightened, and without talking to each other, both pondered a series of questions: how would this affect their work in the group? what about Lynn's ex-lover, who was also in the same group? what about Laurie's male lover? would Laurie know how to manage two completely different relationships in two different worlds? and would Lynn not be too vulnerable?

Laurie talked only to her male lover before entering into the relationship. He accepted it as part of life with a feminist woman. Lynn talked to a few of her friends, who all said, "Maybe a fling would be all right, but if you get in too deep it could be terrible; she'll ditch you for a man when the going

(continued on page 6)

MALE PREGNANCY: A DELIGHTFUL TURN OF THE TABLES

BY

Male Pregnancy. Is that music to a woman's ears, or what?

According to this month's Omni magazine, male pregnancy is going to be a real option in only 10 or 20 years. I won't bore you with the biological details, but at last it will be possible for men to enjoy the exquisite experience of giving birth - an experience they have thus far been denied. (Though Groucho once said it was easy enough to imagine: "Just take hold of your lips - now fold them back over your head.")

The problem is, that sort of description might make your average male a bit hesitant to take advantage of the pregnancy option. Of course, ultimately we'll want to convince them to take the leading role in what historically has been called (heh heh) "the miracle of birth". Therefore, in preparation for this big birth-tech breakthrough, let us explain to you men some of the far-reaching benefits pregnancy will offer you.

First of all, it will become your ultimate bargaining chip. We all know the seriousness with which the modern couple divvies up the domestic duties on 50-50 lines. I do the marketing, you do the cooking, I do the garbage, you do the fish tank, etc. It now will be possible to really scale up the ante. I would venture that an "I'll do the pregnancy" offer on the part of any man could garner you at least 30 to 40 years of folded socks AND ironed underwear. With no bitching.

Secondly, you've got your cataclysmic mood swings. Pregnancy will offer you a wonderful nine-month opportunity to weep at the drop of a hat, kvetch constantly and have trillions of temper tantrums. (We, of course, will do our best not to be too patronizing and blame the whole thing on your hormones.)

Speaking of hormones, as a pregnant man, you will

(continued on page 9)

The newsletter of The Boston Bisexual Women's Network

Reader's Forum



Dear BBWN,

First of all, I want to tell you how much I enjoy your newsletter.

In regards to the reprint of your article by Caitland Sullivan (she writes for the Seattle Gay News) in Vol. 4, No. 5, which has a point I'd like to clarify.

There have been three mixed groups in Seattle. The first group I was involved in during 1981-83. The people who were coming to the group had not been carefully screened and there were several men and women who needed therapy, not support. (I was appalled at myself for the comment on "weirdos.") It was an unfortunate experience and I dropped out of the group. Consequently, I did not participate in the second mixed group.

The group that's running now (the third group) has been tremendously supportive. They screen all participants carefully and refer the people who need therapy, rather than support, to the appropriate channels. All in all, it's an extremely well run group.

Best wishes to you, BBWN, and keep up the great work.

Sincerely,
Jet T.

Dear BBWN,

Thank you for the friendliness and hospitality of your recent introductory meeting at the Cambridge Women's Center.

The openness and low-keyed approach were refreshing in what can be a perplexing search for kindred spirits.

I'm looking forward to participating in BBWN activities.

Kim P.

Imagine a world where everyone is bisexual....



Heroic fantasy by J.F. Rivkin

"It's fun to see a tall, handsome, hard-fighting, hard-drinking, womanizing barbarian hero—who is female."

—PIERS ANTHONY

"Rousing adventure by, for, and about women."

—JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON

"Colorful characters, fast-paced excitement, and plenty of bed-hopping. J.F. Rivkin is a writer to watch!"

—PHYLLIS ANN KARR

Author of the *Frostflower* books



available wherever fantasy
and science-fiction are sold \$2.95

Dear BBWN,

I have defined myself as "bisexual" since 1980, and since that time, I have found myself walking down a very lonely road most of the time. My recent discovery of the existence of BBWN has been one of the major assurances I have that I am not entirely alone. The newsletters contain so much that I identify with in my own daily experience and thoughts. The lengthier articles you print, which are frequently, but not always, strictly political, are especially encouraging because they are thoughtful and intelligent. The BBWN newsletter provides an excellent blend of the personal and the theoretical, and this is important, necessary, and appreciated very much, which is why I am sending a donation.

Sincerely,
Linda P.

Dear BBWN,

... I have moved and am living on the west coast. I miss my bi group in Portland, Maine, but am quickly finding other bi women here in Seattle. It's great to meet people who think they are isolated and tell them about our group and BBWN. I still like to read the newsletter and although the calendar doesn't do me any good out here, I enjoy hearing what you are up to. If you know of any bi women's groups I'd appreciate hearing about it. Good luck with all your endeavors.

Much love,
Robin C.

Dear BBWN,

Here's news of a new film with a bi character, in case you haven't heard about it. Haven't seen it yet so I don't know how good it is.

Seems to be more films with bi men than women in them. (I wonder why.) And bisexual characters seem to be portrayed more fairly (non-stereotypically, more gently) than gay men or lesbians (who are—as in *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*—called "the homosexual" as if we were nothing but our sexual identity).

Best,
Stacie

FILM REVIEW

Menage (at the Nickelodeon) is Bertrand Blier's best film to be released in America since *Get Out Your Handkerchiefs*, and it is one of the highlights of the film year. This story of a bisexual nihilist (Gerard Depardieu) who "corrupts" a married couple (Miou-Miou and Michel Blanc) into thievery, unanticipated sexual preferences, and other acts of nonconformity shares the same qualities with all of Blier's best. It's comically subversive, sexually uninhibited and briskly-paced. Depardieu again shows us that he is, with the possible exception of Robert DeNiro, the major film star most willing to take risks.

--From the Weekender and Supplement to the
Cambridge Chronicle

I AM WHAT I AM

by Jerry Herman

I am what I am
I am my own special creation
So come take a look
Give me the hook or the ovation
It's my world
That I want to have a little pride in
My world,
And it's not a place I have to hide in
Life's not worth a damn,
'Til you can say
"Hey world, I am what I am."

I am what I am
I don't want praise, I don't want pity.
I bang my own drum,
Some think it's noise, I think it's pretty.
And so what if I
Love each feather and each spangle
Why not try
And see things from a different angle?
Your life is a sham,
'Til you can shout out loud,
"I am what I am."

I am what I am
And what I am needs no excuses.
I deal my own deck,
Sometimes the ace, sometimes the deuces.
There's one life,
And there's no return and no deposit;
One life,
So it's time to open up your closet.
Life's not worth a damn,
'Til you can say,
"Hey world, I am what I am!"

I am what I am
I am my own special creation.
So come take a look
Give me the hook or the ovation.
It's my world
That I want to have a little pride in
My world,
And it's not a place I have to hide in.
Life's not worth a damn,
'Til you can say,
"Hey world, I am what I am."

I am what I am
I don't want praise, I don't want pity
I bang my own drum,
Some think it's noise, I think it's pretty
It's my song
And if you don't like the style I bring to
My song,
So at least respect my right to sing it,
Your life is a sham,
'Til you can shout out loud
"I am what I am."

I am what I am
And what I am needs no excuses.
I deal my own deck
Sometimes the ace, sometimes the deuces.
It's high time
That I blow my horn and sound my trumpet,
High time,
And if you don't like it you can lump it.
Life's not worth a damn,
'Til you can say
"Hey world, I am what I am!"

Song sung at Pride

HONOR ROLL

Special thanks to the following women for time and energy generously given to the BBWN during the months of September and October 1986:

Charnan Bray
Mary-Charlotte Domandi
Sharon G.
Susan H.
Hope
Kim
[REDACTED]
LeVan
Marie

Theresa
Shelly
[REDACTED]
Lisa Woody
Blake Walton
Laura Sachs
Mirta P.
Robyn Ochs
Nadine D.



FACT OF AIDS

The Center for Communicable Diseases in Atlanta, which tracks the number of AIDS cases in this country, revealed that, as of Sept. 1; out one of the 24,430 cases reported since 1981 had involved the sexual transmission of the deadly virus from female to female.

--From *Parade Magazine*, October 5, 1986



A BAD JOKE

Q: How many bisexuals does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

A: I just can't make up my mind.



THE BULLETIN BOARD

The Bulletin Board is an information resource serving the adult bisexual community with announcements of events, activities and informal social gatherings in the New York metropolitan area.

Participation by individuals and organizations is on a self sustaining, no fee basis. Subscribers are encouraged to submit items of community interest. Submissions from persons living outside the immediate area are most welcome.

To Subscribe:

Enclose eight (8) stamped, self-addressed, letter sized envelopes (4 1/8" x 9 1/2") inside a larger envelope; a 4 3/4" x 11" manila envelope works best. Seal the larger envelope and mail to The Bulletin Board. Please type or clearly print all addresses.

Every three to four weeks, we will use one of your SSAEs to mail you current notices and items of general interest.

To Submit Items:

Mail submissions to The Bulletin Board, P.O. Box 8556, NY, NY 10150, ATTN: NEWS. Items cannot be returned unless submitted with a stamped, self addressed envelope to cover return postage costs.



WOMEN'S POLITICAL ACTION HOTLINE

(617) 354-6394

For the most up to date information on marches, demonstrations, political events, and legislation which affect women. Sponsored by The Women's Center, Cambridge, MA. To give information to be included on Hotline, please call The Women's Center at 354-8807.



GAY AND LESBIAN HOTLINE

426-9371

The Gay & Lesbian Hotline is a resource available to bisexuals as well as to lesbians and gay men. Volunteers on the hotline are trained to consider bisexuality a legitimate and acceptable option. Hotline hours are Monday - Friday, 6 - 11 p.m.



BISEXUAL SPEAKERS BUREAU

There have been occasions that BBWN has received requests to have people speak at different workshops and events.

If you are interested in being a speaker, please contact Robyn Ochs at 247-6683 (BIS-MOVE) and leave a message.



MARRIED BISEXUALS SUPPORT GROUP

Interested in forming or joining a support group for married bisexuals? Please contact Mirta, P.O. Box 98, Newton Lower Falls, MA 02162.

DO YOU LIKE MONEY?

Be the new BBWN treasurer! Sharon is stepping down after a year of service, and we need someone new to do this simple, yet fulfilling job. Please call Sharon at (617) 646-1295 for more information.



THE BISEXUAL CONFERENCE: We Want YOU

Planning has begun for the Annual Conference on Bisexuality to be held this spring. Please participate! You can lead a workshop, help organize, make phone calls, etc.

If you have experience facilitating workshops, we would like very much to hear your ideas. Please call Sharon at (617) 646-1295 for more information.



THE MEN'S NETWORK

We, as bisexual women, applaud and support the activities of the Boston Bisexual Men's Network (BBMN). The newsletter they publish, the Bi-Monthly, is full of information, news affecting the men's community (especially A.I.D.S./A.R.C.), and announcements of lectures and meetings sponsored by BBMN (keep up the good work!). Bisexuality is an issue that affects women and men, and the efforts of both are needed to fully realize our place in society. So, sisters, pass the good word to your bisexual men friends: BBMN, P.O. Box 1645, Cambridge, MA 02238.



DOLLAR WOES

The BBWN Newsletter is funded by subscriptions only. Every single dollar is welcome and necessary. Please contribute as generously as you possibly can. Many of you have paid for the newsletter, but a large number of you still have not. We would vastly prefer not to take names off the mailing list of those we have not heard from, but it may become necessary, as costs increase.

No one will be refused for inability to pay!! If you are unable to send any money at this time, please let us know, and we will be glad to keep you on the list.

TELEPHONE (617) 498-9923

BET MACARTHUR, ACSW LICSW
COUNSELING, PSYCHOTHERAPY
CONSULTATION & TRAINING

14 PLEASANT ST.
CENTRAL SQUARE
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

We are pleased to announce that we finally have a phone, shared by the Boston Bisexual Women's Network (BBWN), the Boston Bisexual Men's Network (BBMN), and the East Coast Bisexual Network (ECBN). The phone number (617-247-6683) is unlisted but easy to remember, as it spells BIS-MOVE or BIS-NOTE. We will use the phone number in calendar listings and such for the networks, and this should also raise our visibility in the gay community.

We also have a phone machine. We want to have an outgoing message that people get when they call which will be recorded with both a woman's and a man's voices. It will include upcoming events sponsored by the networks and directions to leave a name and number in order to receive a (very discrete) call back from the group that they specify.

A schedule for retrieving and returning phone calls and recording new messages will be set up in the very near future. Of course, this won't work if there aren't people to do it. We need people to help by retrieving incoming messages from the tape, by returning or passing on calls that we get, and by recording a new outgoing message with calendar listings, etc. To volunteer occasional help with the phone, call and leave your name and number, and a message saying so!



UNFULFILLED DESIRE . . . TO BE A COMMERCIAL ARTIST?

Have the mysteries of reproduction of images, squaring things up, laying out copy, and design . . . kept you up late at night? Well, we are offering an exciting, fact-filled workshop to put your mind at ease and get those sweet dreams back!

our recently returned foreign correspondent from Australia, with 4 years experience in graphic arts, will lead the workshop.

We will teach you all the skills involved in producing quality printed pieces. Afterwards, you can design your own and put YOUR personal imprint on the BBWN Newsletter: Please see calendar listing for BOTH dates and times. (Dec. 14 & 18).

To conclude this exhilarating afternoon/evening, we will have a delicious potluck dinner/dessert for all concerned. Bring your own delicacies and drinkables!



TREASURER'S REPORT:

Corrected balance as of 9/21/86	615.69
<u>Expenses</u>	
Publicity (ads in Sojourner and Ms. Magazine)	67.40
Printing October/November Newsletter	242.02
BIS-MOVE Phone	37.37
Postage	147.00
New P.O. Box and Key Deposit	24.00
Total	\$517.79
<u>Income</u>	
Membership Dues	300.00
Total	300.00
Balance as of 11/15/86	\$397.90

CONTRIBUTIONS

Please contribute to the Newsletter! You don't have to live in or near Boston, you don't have to be a great writer, you don't even have to use your real name. It is wonderful to hear ideas and thoughts from the incredible range of bisexual women all over the world.

You can submit your ideas; book, movie or theater reviews; articles or clippings from the media; drawings; poetry; accounts of personal experiences; stories; political commentary; and whatever else you can think of!



LAST NAME POLICY

Because it is extremely important to honor the privacy and confidentiality of women in the network, the BBWN Newsletter will not print your last name unless you make a specific request.



RUN BY AND FOR WOMEN
INVITES YOU TO A SIMPLE

WOMEN'S RETREAT ON THE SMALL ISLAND OF VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO

Available for individual or group camping, workshops, or a place to begin your exploration of the Caribbean. Easy adventures from rain forest hikes, sunning on quiet beaches to "down island" sails.

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Gloucester, MA 01930
Tel. 617-283-8717

(continued from page 1)

gets rough." But Lynn didn't think Laurie was like that. And she had too much of a crush on her to be able to stop herself.

Against all predictions, the relationship not only began but prospered. If there was a women's event on Friday night Lynn and Laurie would go together, and then Laurie would be with her male lover on Saturday while Lynn went out with her other friends. Lynn found herself being closely questioned by all her lesbian friends, who thought this was too good to last.

But it wasn't. It lasted . . . until Lynn herself, whose views on men had undergone quite a drastic change for the better since getting to know (indirectly) Laurie's male lover, began to feel herself getting a crush on a heterosexual male friend. She blocked it for several months, thinking that it was just a phase and that she would get over it; after all, she was quite happy in her relationship with Laurie. But the crush refused to go away. She still spoke as a lesbian, wore lesbian buttons, socialized with her lesbian friends . . . but she had a secret crush on a man. Finally, she decided to tell Laurie about it.

Laurie said, "Well, I'm certainly in no position to prevent you from having other relationships, especially with men. But it's funny you should get a crush on a man now; I have been thinking that I am probably a lesbian, or mostly a lesbian, anyway. . . ."

Ana comes from a working-class Italian family. She is thirty-one and divorced, and has a six-year-old boy. She doesn't want to get seriously involved with anyone, partly because her son had a hard time with the divorce and she thinks it would not be good if he got attached to somebody else only to see that connection vanish. She has had two affairs with women in the last few years, one during a holiday in which she had left her son with his father, and one in a semi-surreptitious manner. She didn't want her son to find out and tell his father about the strange woman in mommy's bedroom. At present Ana is attracted both to men and to women, and knows she could easily get into a relationship with either. But the lesbians she knows are wary of bisexuals; and the men she knows would probably freak out at the thought of her lesbian side, even if they pretended to be cool about it. She feels caught in a net. She hates having to be deceptive; even more, she hates having to feel devious and deceptive just because she is bisexual.

The women described above are all in some sense bisexual, but only Ana and Laurie think of themselves in those terms. Ruth might be perceived by some lesbians as a traitor, a "true" lesbian who went straight because it was more convenient. Others might describe her as bisexual or as "really" straight. And as for Lynn and Laurie, who knows.

Underlying these opinions and judgements is the myth that everyone is "really," "deep down," *either gay or straight*—except for a very few people who might be allowed to be "really" bisexual. This is the myth that we all have some inner core of sexual truth which exists and persists even while our surface behaviour patterns change. Some people think that this inner core is determined biologically by hormones and genes; others think it is determined by early psychological experiences. Those with a heterosexual bias might tend to believe that a particular person is "really" heterosexual, unless that person protests strongly, while those with a gay bias might tend to think that anyone who is in a gray area is "really" gay. The debate about whether person X is "really" gay or straight, however, fails to question the underlying assumption about the inner sexual core.

The way people use this myth is as follows. If a man who has been having sex with men since age thirteen falls in love

with a woman at age thirty-two, this would be "explained" by saying that the man was heterosexual all along but was afraid of women. To go back to our fictional characters, Ruth's experiences could be neatly categorized by saying that she went through a "lesbian phase" under the influence of feminism, and only later realized her "true" heterosexual potential. An alternative but equally mythical explanation would be to say that she found her true nature in lesbianism but then entered a period of "false consciousness" as a result of the failure of her relationship with Kate. The explanations could multiply.

Why are we so intent on assuming an inner core of sexual truth? Why do we have to rewrite our histories and dismiss experiences that were at the time extremely powerful as "just a phase"? Would it not be better to work from the hypothesis that sexual orientation is not a given, like blue eyes or a tendency to gain weight, but is rather subject to profound changes—and is in fact constantly created and recreated—as our sexual and social experiences unfold?

Nobody knows how sexual orientation is in fact determined. One reason for this failure is that almost all research to date has concentrated on finding the "causes" of homosexuality, as if heterosexuality had no cause. Thus, it might be better to work from a hypothesis that allows for both change and positive choices, rather than one which sees people as mere pawns of some hard, fixed core of sexual identity. It is true that there are some people who are exclusively attracted to either one gender or the other, and who from a very tender age felt "pushed" by their exclusive desire. But many other people, and women in particular, experience their own sexual orientation as more fluid. This has to be recognized in any theory of sexual orientation, and clearly the category of bisexuality is an important conceptual tool in this type of analysis.

And yet, the rejection of hetero- and homosexuality as two different species with fixed boundaries does not mean that we should go to the other extreme and dismiss all differences in sexual orientation by blandly saying, "but everyone is bisexual anyway." This statement is often legitimized by reference to the Freudian model of sexual development, which sees early childhood sexuality as the child's pleasure in his/her own body. According to Freud, heterosexuality develops only by means of the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Prior to this, the child does not make gender distinctions in his/her desire, and is primarily focused either on autoerotic activities or on the mother (because she is the primary parent, not because she is female).

This theory can be used to suggest that bisexuals are closer to the innocence of pre-Oedipal childhood than those who have singled out one gender as the sole object of desire. One sometimes hears that bisexuality is superior to both the conformity of exclusive heterosexuality and the narrowness of exclusive homosexuality. In other words, this approach legitimizes bisexuality in the same way that conservative thought legitimizes exclusive heterosexuality, i.e. by reference to a myth of what is "natural." The only difference is that the bisexual myth emphasizes the innocence of early childhood, while the heterosexual myth emphasizes concepts such as "maturity."

The bisexual-as-innocent myth, however, is based on an incorrect reading of Freudian theory. One cannot assume that because babies and young children do not differentiate very much between genders—the significant distinctions are pleasure versus non-pleasure, mother versus absence of mother—therefore adults are in some essential way bisexual. The baby's generalized erotic drives, or "polymorphous perversity" (as Freud called it), is not the same as or even the foundation for adult bisexual behaviour. The baby's erotic drives are not directed toward "men" and "women" as distinct genders, but

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rather toward autoerotic pleasures such as sucking one's thumb or touching one's genitals, or to the mother as object of desire and source of nurture and pleasure. The infant's sexuality is both pre-genital and pre-gendered.

The bisexual behaviour of adults who choose to eroticize both men and women is the furthest thing from this primeval innocence. Adult bisexuality is both genitally focused (unlike the child's oral, anal and phallic eroticisms) and gender conscious. It is not an innocent, pre-genital eroticization of all bodily experience, but rather involves the selection of properly gendered men and women as objects of desire within the context of fairly rigid rules about what constitutes real sex.

The false analogy between the baby's polymorphous eroticism and the adult's bisexuality has been used to suggest that, far from being indecisive or fickle sexual beings (which is the view of mainstream society), bisexuals are "closer to nature" and are even superior because of their non-exclusivity.

If the myth of a sexual state of nature (in which bisexuals get to play the noble savage) is a useful one in terms of the psychological self-justification of bisexuals, the myth also has certain political uses and consequences. By stressing the alleged "essential" bisexuality of all human beings, heterosexuality and homosexuality tend to appear simply as alternative ways of narrowing down the original sexual drive. They tend to be presented as comparable choices, as "sexual preferences."

The model of "sexual preference," as Adrienne Rich points out in her classic essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"¹ is problematic mainly because it is based on the liberal myth that one makes one's sexual choices through individual preference. Rich points out that, given the enormous social weight of heterosexism, one cannot accurately describe heterosexuality as merely a personal preference, as though there were not countless social forces pushing one to be heterosexual. People do not generally choose heterosexuality out of a number of equally valid, equally respected lifestyles. Rather, people tend to "naturally" become heterosexual as they become adult sexual beings. By speaking of homosexuality and heterosexuality (and for that matter bisexuality) as "preferences," one is disguising and mystifying the institution that Rich calls "compulsory heterosexuality." As long as certain choices are punished while others are presented as natural, as the norm, it is naive to describe the complicated process of the construction of conformity and/or deviance by reference to a consumer-type notion of personal preference.

To point out that heterosexuality is not accurately described as a "preference" is not to imply that homosexuality or bisexuality, as non-conformist lifestyles, are necessarily "free" choices. As we said earlier, by stepping out of respectability one does not necessarily escape the grasp of the sexual experts; one does not step out of the realm of necessity and into the realm of pure freedom. Many people who are attracted to the "wrong" gender feel *driven* by their own desires, feel compelled to seek homosexual partners, and do not experience their homosexuality as the exercise of freedom. However, even those people who have experienced their homosexual desires as dark forces governing them, rather than as freely chosen paths to self-fulfilment, are forced at some point to define themselves, and ask how and why they have come to have such desires. One may choose to say, "I was born gay," or "I am bisexual because . . ."; but regardless of the answers that we give ourselves, we all have to spend some time thinking about the reasons why we took this particular path, and what the social consequences are. Heterosexuals do not have a comparable experience. Since we all "naturally" grow up to be heterosexual, it is only the deviations that call out for an explanation; the norm appears as natural, and few heterosexual people ever wonder whatever caused them to be heterosexual.

As explained in the previous chapter, society does everything in its power to construct a certain pattern of heterosexual behaviour out of each child's autoerotic and polysexual drives. Sometimes the social forces are for one reason or another ineffectual, and the adolescent or adult "discovers" certain deviant desires in her/himself. Society then does what it can to mould the deviant desires into one of the patterns provided by the experts. If it failed to give you a normal heterosexual identity, it will give you a deviant identity as a homosexual.

It is interesting that although bisexuality, like homosexuality, is just another deviant identity, it also functions as a rejection of the norm/deviance model. People who are bisexual, and not just in a transition between heterosexuality and homosexuality, are people who have resisted both society's first line of attack and its second offensive, i.e. they have resisted both the institution of heterosexuality and of homosexuality. This means that every day they have to make specific choices about how they will appear, with whom they will flirt, what style they will express in clothes and mannerisms.

However, the flexibility and ambiguity inherent in bisexuality do not suffice to allow bisexuals to hover comfortably somewhere "above" the gay/straight split. Nobody can escape the social structures and ideologies that govern both gender formation and sexual-orientation formation, which have created hetero- and homosexuality as the main, institutionalized sexual identities. What bisexuals do is not so much escape the gay/straight split, but rather manage it. They are not above the fray, but participate in it by locating themselves at different points in the split according to the circumstances. Bisexuality is best seen not as a completely separate Third Option that removes itself from all the problems of both hetero- and homosexuality, but rather as a choice to combine the two lifestyles, the two erotic preferences, in one way or another.

This view of bisexuality as a combination of the two main sexual identities rather than a separate identity explains how there can be such huge differences among bisexuals. Homosexuals may be very different from each other—the closeted male politician who has secret affairs with boys does not have much in common with the lesbian feminist—but at the very least they all face a common social oppression and a marginalization into gay ghettos. Bisexuals, on the other hand, do not have a common social experience upon which to build a specific social identity, although they do all share the problem of how to manage the gay/straight split and avoid feeling schizophrenic in the process.

Bisexuals who are unaware of the effects of heterosexism, and who see their situation as a purely individual choice with no significant social repercussions, often unwittingly reinforce, or at least go along with, heterosexist practices. If I have two lovers, one male and one female, it will not be easy to keep in mind that the heaps of social approval piled upon my "straight" relationship should be taken with a grain of salt. I will "naturally" tend to keep my lesbian relationship more private, without mentioning it to family and coworkers. I might also be more likely to tolerate faults and selfish habits in a man, because "you know how men are." For all my claims to gender blindness, I will have different expectations from men and from women, and society will treat my two relationships very differently. I might tend to differentiate myself from my lesbian lover, and assume that it will be she who will fight for gay rights, while I nod encouragingly from the sidelines. If I get some tolerance for my lesbian relationship, I might congratulate myself on having tolerant friends, without looking at the historic fight of gays and lesbians to create tolerance.

On the other hand, bisexuals who are aware of how gay oppression and heterosexism shape the contours of their own lives are in a good position to challenge these oppressive social

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forces, even as they make it clear that they are fighting as bisexuals, not as honorary gays or pseudo-gays. Those bisexuals who see themselves as sometimes benefiting from heterosexual privilege and at other times suffering gay oppression, and can see the different consequences of different ways of managing the gay/straight split are also those who tend to take up gay rights as a cause that affects them personally. They are the ones who do not vigorously protest when someone says, "Gee, I saw you going into a gay bar."

However, up until now the gay community has not been at all encouraging or even tolerant of bisexuals who have a commitment to resisting heterosexism and gay oppression. Gay people have traditionally dismissed bisexuals as deceitful, unreliable, and cowardly. This negative view has unfortunately been confirmed by the existence of many bisexuals who maintain a public heterosexual image while indulging in gay relationships in private, thus escaping gay oppression in a way that gay people can never do. Gay people do have a right to demand that bisexuals do not fall into the easy trap of being publicly straight and privately gay. However, there are now bisexuals, especially feminist women, who are resisting that traditional easy approach and who are increasingly willing to be public about their gay side. They have to be welcomed and treated with respect for their sexual choice. Gay people have to stop assuming that everyone who is bisexual is simply either afraid of coming out or is in transition to being fully gay. The transition theory assumes that those who call themselves bisexual are "really" gay, and this is as much an error as the belief that everyone is "really" bisexual. Both rely on the assumption that sexual orientation is an inner essence, an assumption known as "essentialism."

Because of our society's firmly entrenched belief in sexual essentialism, we are all more or less uncomfortable with people who are sexually ambiguous. We insist that everyone have a fixed gender identity and a fixed sexual orientation. When we see someone in the street and we cannot tell if it is a man or a woman, we get uneasy and go out of our way to get a second look. We do not rest until we have determined the correct gender of this person (who is otherwise completely unimportant to us). Now, sexual orientation is not as visible on a person as gender, but we all derive a certain satisfaction from investigating people's sexual identities and proceeding to label them as X or Y. Bisexuality is threatening partly because it seems to challenge our classification system, thus putting into question fundamental notions about sexuality and gender. Thus, even if some traditional bisexual behaviour patterns are questionable, and even though there is no such thing as an institutionalized bisexuality comparable to heterosexual and homosexuality, I still think it is important to give sexual ambiguity a place in the sun of radical sexual thought. In other words, even though I share some of the gay skepticism about bisexuality, and am concerned to see bisexuals take a more active role in challenging heterosexism, I am also critical of the dogmatic view—found as much among gay people as among straight people—that bisexuals are inherently indecisive and immature. If the goals of feminism and gay liberation include the abolition of the gay/straight split, and its replacement by a social system which does not label and categorize people according to whom they are attracted, then bisexuality is an important part of the challenge to the status quo. Its role could involve vindicating and affirming sexual ambiguity, in a world which is presently extremely uncomfortable with any ambiguity. Bisexuality defies the experts' attempts to classify everything as either male or female, normal or deviant, good or bad.

One day over lunch, a bisexual friend was lamenting the fact that she seemed to be constantly faced with ethical and

political dilemmas, and she reflected on the plight of bisexual women who are forever being judged and scrutinized. I nodded sympathetically, and tried to tell her not to worry about how she was presenting herself in the women's movement, or about whether lesbians would be offended if she called herself a lesbian in order to share lesbian oppression and take responsibility for it. She was, I thought, an honest and thoughtful person, so I told her, "trust your political intuition, don't be so introspective, there'll always be somebody who criticizes you no matter what you do."

The next day I had dinner with a lesbian friend who has been badly burned by bisexual women twice. Both of these bisexual women were self-consciously attractive and charismatic. They both seemed at first interested in a serious relationship, but in the end discarded her, or rather, treated her as a second-class lover. As she recounted the experiences for my benefit, I thought, "Maybe I should not have been so understanding yesterday—you never know what will happen if you tell bisexual women to just trust their political and ethical intuition."

I later decided that the two experiences—that of my bisexual friend intent on being responsible, and that of my lesbian friend burned by bisexual women—were qualitatively different, and there was little point in putting them both in the bisexual file. What was at issue in my lesbian friend's unhappy experience was not her lovers' eroticization of men as well as women, but rather the way they used their access to men (and therefore to status) against her and against the relationship. It is not that their heartlessness derives from their bisexuality. Rather, bisexuality offered their selfishness ample ground to exercise itself.

By contrast, my bisexual friend was keenly aware of the potential power imbalance inherent in a relationship between a bisexual and a lesbian, and she was trying to find ways to counteract and subvert that potential. She was, in other words, counteracting the privilege she had acquired in her heterosexual life. This is why she wanted to publicly identify with lesbians—although she was understandably intimidated by the lesbian feminist heavies who had denounced her as "not a real lesbian." I could see why some lesbians might feel uncomfortable with women who identify as lesbians without being fully integrated into lesbian life; but in my opinion, those lesbians are being dogmatic and are too zealously guarding the boundaries of lesbianism. They are victims of society's general tendency to feel uncomfortable with ambiguity.

Bisexuality does not exist as either a social institution or a psychological "truth." It only exists as a catch-all term for different erotic and social patterns whose common ground is an attempt to combine homo- and heterosexuality in a variety of ways. The term "bisexual," then, merely tells us that someone can or does eroticize both men and women. It does not tell us anything about the morality or politics of that person. The decisions that inevitably have to be made about how to manage one's sexual life and one's social image will be based on extraneous factors (such as commitment to feminism).

However, there is one important way in which bisexuality plays a role in the struggle for a society free from sharp gender and sexual orientation boundaries. This lies in the implicit challenge to notions of essential and static sexual identities. Even those people who define themselves as "definitely gay" or "definitely straight" are often in the position of having to admit to desires that do not fit their current social identity—the autobiographical anecdotes I presented in the chapter on heterosexuality are just one example of this. And in this sense it would be a great boon to all of us if there were more social space for self-defined bisexuals. This would mean that we would all be a little freer from exclusivist and essentialist def-

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Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes 10/26/86:

Present: Mary-Charlotte D., Nancy K., Sharon G., Laura S., Robyn O., Susie S., Lavon H., Jean K., Shelly C.

1) Newsletter: Please note that the return address for BBWN has changed!!! We have officially relocated to P.O. BOX 639, Cambridge, MA 02140. Mail that is sent to the old box will be forwarded for the next 6 months.

2) Telephone update: We now have a phone established. Please see article in the newsletter for complete info.

3) Non-profit status - Mary-Charlotte and Nancy have volunteered to work on getting non-profit status for BBWN. If there are any members in the network who have information to share about this, please call 247-6683 and leave a message. Thanx muchly.

4) A request was placed by the BBMN (the men's network) to share our bulk mail permit. The pros would involve the cost being \$25 less. The cons involve how it would be administered, how to get payments to us, having to pay everytime we go to mail, who is depositing what, etc. Currently the men's network does not have the 200 member (piece) minimum for bulk mailing. The request was not approved but may come up for reevaluation in the future.

5) Women's Leadership Training Workshop update: being held Sunday, Nov. 2. To be a 6 hr. workshop, have a place to talk about defining leadership, setting goals, plans, strategies, etc. Mary-Charlotte, Robyn, Susie facilitators. This is a beginning workshop with possible follow-up workshops.

6) We need to establish a contract for other groups doing work with or regarding BBWN.

7) Financial Report: Current balance \$540., Membership drive \$660., 3 months payment for phone \$37.37, printing \$184.80, flyer \$18.00, M.C.'s flyer \$51.47, Please see up-to-date Treasurers Report in Newsletter.

8) Approval was given for a free trade-off of the Intercollegiate Newsletter and ours.

9) General Meeting will be held Nov. 19, topic, "Women Who Love too Much". Discussion ensued about finding another space to hold general meetings besides New Words Bookstore. Possibly Cambridge Women's Center? Possibly change night meeting is held. Nancy or Laura will go to a Women's Center General Meeting and request time and space.

10) Newsletter: As previously discussed, Blake has been the editor of the newsletter for nearly a year and so that neither she nor anyone else suffers burn-out, the work must be redistributed. The following persons have volunteered to work on certain aspects of the newsletter:

Jean will train people about graphic arts & how to do layout and design (Please see Dec. 14 & 18 calendar listing)

Blake will train people about layout & design

Mary-Charlotte will work on layout, & write a gossip or general column

Nancy will work on articles and research

Laura will work on calendar, treasurer's report, c.c. minutes, layout

Mirta and Sharon have also expressed interest in working on the newsletter

11) Sharon will be stepping down as treasurer for BBWN in January. She has been treasurer for a year and would like to train someone to step into the position. If you are interested please call 247-6683 and leave a message. It's FUN!! Also place ad in newsletter.

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initions. Of course, because our society is rigidly gendered and is heterosexist in structure, it would be utopian to imagine that bisexuality could exist in a haven beyond gender and beyond gay oppression. But even a bisexuality with all the contradictions imposed on it by our society can help to challenge the sexual status quo. Contradictions, after all, are the moving force of history.

From: **Sex, Power and Pleasure**
The Women's Press

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have to understand if during this time the wife seems to be considerably more interested in sex than you are. (Beast that she is.) Not to worry. Just tell her your doctor said it isn't safe. That one has been working for years.

One of the things you will probably enjoy most during your nine months is the chance to gorge without guilt. Remember you are eating for two. Even though one of you is the size of a pinhead and the other of you is rapidly becoming the size of William (Refrigerator) Perry. Not to worry, the body accommodates all this. Why else do you think God invented stretch marks and varicose veins? Little badges of your biological valor that you can carry with you for life.

Additionally, pregnancy offers you a wonderful chance to believe in Tinkerbell, Santa Claus, all things bright and beautiful again. What we mean by this is you will not once hear the word "pain" mentioned. Nor will you hear the term "excruciating pain". You will also never hear the words "moaning" or "writhing". Pregnancy will afford you a wondrous journey back into the world of fantasy.

I have saved the best for last. By far, the most lasting benefit you will gain from your pregnancy is humility. Let me assure you there is nothing quite like your basic childbirth position to knock any egotistical notions right out of you. There you'll be - all swabbed and splayed out with only four nurses, a doctor, an anesthesiologist, a resident and 4,000 medical students in attendance. And don't worry. Your wife will be with you, too.

She'll be the one with the video camera.

(reprinted from the Boston Herald, Friday, Dec. 20, 1985, page 53.)

12) Conference update: We brainstormed some ideas & concerns about the upcoming conference: a) We need more people b) we need to charge more for a weekend conference c) establish a better sliding scale for payments, as well as making sure that no one is turned away for lack of funds d) see about stipends & paying people who facilitate or work on conference e) Make \$\$\$\$ - have greater options for outreach and future events if cash is generated f) needs that have to be met - organizing, site requirements, site selection g) possibly have keynote speaker or papers presented h) more fun and play!! i) be careful not to overextend so there will be other conferences in the future!!!

-- Laura Sachs

[illegible]